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Basic Education in Africa

USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s

Joseph DeStefano
Ash Hartwell
Karen Tietjen

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Preface

In 1988 the U.S. Congress introduced the DFA legislation (Development Fund for Africa), which required USAID, in particular the Africa Bureau, to increase spending on basic education in Africa in an effort to strengthen the human resource base of the continent and to prepare the groundwork for sustainable development. Since 1989 the Agency has launched eight new (and extended four other) education programs in sub-Saharan Africa, most of which are modeled on a new and evolving understanding of educational development and the role of donors. In carrying out the mandate of the DFA, the Bureau decided to prepare two reports. The first, intended primarily for Congress and other interested parties, provided a largely descriptive overview of USAID's basic education programs across the continent. The second, presented here, is intended for the larger development community and attempts to arrive at an understanding of program successes and failures and to distill lessons and best practices based on six years of experience across the continent.

In an effort to better understand what the education programs have accomplished, the research team went through the lengthy process of unbundling the expectations and articulating the unstated assumptions embedded in USAID's new approach to education. In so doing, much was learned, not only about the programs themselves, but about the conditions for success as well as the pitfalls to be avoided.

The research began in the summer of 1992, and the analysis is the result of a three-year consultative process with USAID Missions, education officers, the Agency=s Global and Africa Bureaus, African ministries of education, and other donors. (The information presented here is current to December 1994, and may not reflect most current funding levels and activities.) The Africa Bureau presented an initial draft to USAID education personnel at the January 1994 Kadoma Conference in Zimbabwe. A "State of the ARTS" presentation to Africa Bureau personnel and a panel discussion at the 1993 Comparative and International Education Society conference further enriched the paper with feedback and comments on later revisions. The report and its analysis represent a general consensus, though not unanimity, on the impacts, advantages, and challenges of implementing USAID=s new approach to educational reform. Based on field experience, the report provides practical advice for improving the design, management, and evaluation of the Agency=s education support programs. Of course, the ultimate test of education reform is whether it better enables schools to provide children with appropriate learning environments. We have found that USAID has an important role to play in supporting the development of conditions in which schools can function effectively.

Clearly, the primary audience for this report is those who work directly on USAID=s basic education initiatives in AfricaCUSAID personnel, institutional contractors, consultants, etc. Many of the issues discussed relate specifically to USAID=s internal procedures, and the vocabulary is somewhat jargonistic. We hope this will not limit readership. Those working on USAID=s education programs in other regions as well as those working on reform programs in other sectors may find that some of the problems confronted and lessons learned transcend regional and sectoral boundaries. Finally, other donors and African governments may gain insight into the rationale and operational imperatives behind USAID=s education programs.

Admittedly, this report is lengthy and unlikely to be read at a single sitting. For the reader pressed for

time or interested in a specific issue, the following reader=s guide identifies some key questions and the sections of the report which address them.

Reader=s Guide

Question	Answer Source
! Why the Education Sector Support Approach?	
Crisis in African education	Sections 1.2.3, 3.2
New models of educational change	Chapters 1, 2, 7
Traditional projects vs. ESS programs	Chapter 4; Sections 1.1, 1.4, 7.1
Proper role of donors	Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, 5; Sections 4.4, 7.1; Table 1.6
! Implications of USAID=S Experience in African Basic Education:	
Preconditions for effective support	Introduction; Chapter 2; Sections 1.3, 4.1, 7.2
Policy dialogue	Sections 4.2, 7.4.2
Sector analysis	Section 7.4.1
Design	Chapters 4, 5, 6
Finance mechanisms	Section 4.3.3
Conditionality	Chapter 5
Monitoring, assessment, & evaluation	Chapters 3, 6; Section 7.4.6
Capacity, institutional development	Sections 1.3.3, 7.4.4

Acknowledgments

Much appreciation is due to those who created this report. Thanks go to Missions and education program staff for so generously sharing time, resources, contacts with Africans, lessons learned, guidance, and feedback. Many in USAID/Washington have made considerable effort to review this document. Very special thanks go to Joe DeStefano, Ash Hartwell, and Karen Tietjen, who toiled for months to distill understanding on paper. Robin Horn, Diane Prouty, Karen Tietjen, and Joy Wolf launched the questionnaire that started this inquiry in 1992. Gretchen Hummon provided graphics and formatting. Jim Williams labored as editor. Julie Owen-Rea was responsible for general supervision. And the Agency and the DFA made all possible through their commitment to nurture basic education in Africa.

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION: Since 1988, USAID has taken a new approach to educational development in Africa. In contrast to earlier forms of project assistance, which worked directly to remedy specific weaknesses in the education sector, the Education Sector Support (ESS) approach targets reform of the education system itself. Rather than providing solutions to the system=s problems, ESS programs help the system to identify and remedy its own problems. Achieving such systemic sectoral change requires fundamental reform in education policy, resource allocation, and institutional organization and operations, including changed roles for schools, teachers, and communities. These are the cornerstones that will permit governments to achieve sustainable improvements in the access to, equity in, and quality of primary education.

Purpose: This report aims to 1) determine whether the ESS approach to educational development is sound, 2) explore how best to implement ESS programs, and 3) provide preliminary operational guidance to education program designers, implementors, and evaluators.

Organization: To these ends, the report follows this sequence: 1) a description of the ESS approach; 2) a discussion of ESS program impact; 3) an examination of the preconditions necessary for the optimal use of ESS; 4) an analysis of technical management and implementation issues; 5) some of the challenges to assessing program impact; and 6) a summary of lessons learned and future challenges.

BACKGROUND: The ESS approach emerged in response to several factors: 1) a general consensus that a systemic approach was required for enduring educational change, 2) a recognition that governments (and donors) must plan and act within existing resource constraints, 3) a renewed appreciation of basic education as a foundation of economic and social development, and 4) a willingness (along with a mandate) to commit relatively large sums of money to basic education in Africa, as expressed by USAID=s Development Fund for Africa, and the multi-donor aid-coordination group, the Special Program of Assistance.

The ESS Approach: The ESS approach has six elements. It:1) supports national or government-led sector reform, 2) provides budgetary support conditioned on performance, 3) promotes systemic educational change, 4) focuses on institutional development, 5) stresses the importance of donor coordination, and 6) seeks measurable results in student access and performance.

ESS Modalities: The primary support modality of most ESS programs is Non-Project Assistance (NPA). NPA funds are disbursed to governments in tranches when mutually established conditions are met. These conditions reflect the implementation of key policy, institutional, and expenditure reforms. ESS programs also employ, on a limited basis, projectized assistance in the form of technical assistance and training to strengthen education ministries= capacity to plan, manage, and assess their own reform efforts.

ESS Goals: The goals of USAID=s ESS programs are to increase the number of children entering and completing primary school and to improve the quality of their learning in ways that are efficient and sustainable. These five dimensions (access, equity, quality, efficiency, and sustainability) are given varying emphases according to the needs of individual countries, but several conditions have been identified as necessary for effective education sector support.

Executive Summary

Conditions for Reform: Specifically, ESS program experience suggests the following about reform conditionality: 1) The political and economic context plays a large role in determining what an education reform can expect to achieve. 2) ESS works where government commitment to reform is strong and the sectoral strategy is well-defined. 3) Reform priorities and strategies must be related to institutional capacity. Moreover, educational reform and its corresponding capacity building must explicitly focus on the school to address student learning directly. 4) The use of donor funds in financing the reform and the implications for sustainability remain open questions.

Stages of ESS Impact: The Agency=s emphasis on Apeople-level@ impacts raises important questions about the nature of educational reform and the ESS approach. While success has been defined primarily in terms of student-level outcomes (increased gross enrollment rates, reduced repetition and dropout rates, and increased literacy rates), the actual ESS program impacts in 1993 are clustered at the system-level, with tangible improvements in education policy, institutional operations, school support, and community involvement. This indicates that educational reform happens in phases, with changes in the education system and its institutions preceding changes in student outcomes. Student-level changes will likely require a longer time frame than the five years generally allotted to the ESS programs. Because educational systems are "loosely coupled" and resistant to change, and cause-and-effect relationships are only partially understood, the outcomes and timing of reform efforts are somewhat unpredictable. Expecting student-level impacts prematurely not only can cloud objective assessment of ESS program progress, but can also contribute to unsound design decisions and misleading reporting.

ESS Program Effectiveness: ESS program effectiveness depends on technical decisions taken at the predesign, design, and implementation phases. In this regard, experience has yielded the following insights: 1) accurate assessment of government commitment and capacity to carry out the reform is essential to determining whether the ESS approach is appropriate and how the assistance modality should be structured; 2) a clear understanding of national objectives and stakeholder consensus on strategy are essential elements of successful educational reform; 3) getting the right mix of non-project and projectized assistance must be based on a calculus of government commitment, resource availability, and institutional capacityCtoo little technical assistance can result in poor reform implementation, while too little non-project assistance reduces USAID=s ability to leverage policy reform; 4) the mechanisms selected for providing budgetary supportCgeneral cash transfers, debt service repayments, cash transfers to special education accountsChave sustainability and management implications that may involve trade-offs; 5) the principal responsibility for donor coordination should be with the government and the ministry of education; donors should assist governments to develop mechanisms for donor management; and 6) ESS programs are management intensive, requiring new management skills, the involvement of senior Mission personnel, and clear communication among the numerous players within USAID.

Performance Conditionality: Performance conditionality is a major aspect of the ESS approach and NPA modality. The use of conditionality in ESS programs has been successful, particularly for restructuring sector financing. Conditionality falls into four categories: 1) financial, 2) institutional, 3) programmatic, and 4) management. Although the types of conditions used will depend on the objectives and context of the ESS program, different approaches to defining conditionality can help or hinder program implementation. In general, conditionality should be flexible, match the specificity of the conditionality with the stage of the government=s reform effort, and select the scope (policy or implementation) appropriate to the country=s circumstances. Acknowledging the limits to conditionality is also important; technical problems are not likely to be overcome simply by concocting a performance condition. Conditionality management is a time-consuming process; managers must be sure that

conditions are understood, performance criteria are articulated, and reporting formats are specified. Conditionality can sometimes be misconstrued as a proxy for reform implementation, with the emphasis misplaced on legalistic details rather than the intent.

ESS Program Assessment: There are several technical challenges to assessing the impact of ESS programs. Unlike more narrowly focused projects, ESS programs use the entire national education system as the unit of analysis. Consequently, proper assessment of educational reform requires unprecedented amounts and types of data, which exceeds the capacity of most ministries of education to collect and analyze. This creates the dilemma that the very systems in need of reform are the ones that are called on to document improvement. Poor baseline data threatens the credibility of existing information and subsequent calculations of change. Agency accountability and reporting systems generally do not capture ESS program impact, focusing either on management issues or leapfrogging to the assessment of student-level outcomes without adequately reporting on system-level changes. Equating the relatively limited USAID ESS program with the whole of comprehensive educational reform can lead to overestimating USAID=s role in and control over the reform process and expected impacts. It is impossible, given the nature of budgetary support, donor collaboration, and system-wide reform, to track and directly attribute impacts uniquely to USAID=s support.

CONCLUSION: The ESS approach in Africa has led to notable improvements at both the system and student levels. The myriad challenges associated with the use of the ESS approach and the NPA modality can be overcome by understanding the preconditions for successful support programs, appreciating the different stages of reform, integrating sector analysis with program design, making use of policy dialogue, understanding the meaning of participatory development, crafting conditionality more carefully, making realistic assessments of institutional capacity, using a school fundamental quality index to ensure that educational reform reaches schools and students, and charting impacts using indicators that measure intermediate, system-level changes.

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABEL	Advancing Basic Education and Literacy
AED	Academy for Educational Development
API	Assessment of Program Impact
BQS	Basic Quality Standards
CIP	Commodity Import Program
CP	Conditions Precedent
CRT	Criterion-Referenced Testing
DAE	Donors to African Education
DFA	Development Fund for Africa
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EOPS	End of Project Status Indicators
ESS	Education Sector Support (Programing)
FQL	Fundamental Quality Level
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
IEES	Improving the Efficiency of Educational Systems (Project)
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
LOI	Letter of Intent
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	Non-Project Assistance
PA	Project Assistance
PAAD	Program Assistance Approval Document
PRISM	Program Performance Information for Strategic Management
PSC	Personal Services Contractor
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
SFQI	School Fundamental Quality Indicator
TA	Technical Assistance
TDMS	Teacher Development and Management System
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

Since 1988, USAID has taken a new approach to educational development in Africa. In contrast to earlier forms of projectized assistance that worked directly to remedy specific weaknesses in the education sector, this new approach, called Education Sector Support programing (ESS), has worked to achieve systemic, sustainable reform of the education system itself. Rather than providing solutions to the system=s problems, the idea is to help the system identify and remedy its own problems.

Achieving such systemic sectoral change requires both resources and policy reform. USAID=s primary modality for operationalizing the ESS approach has been through Non-Project Assistance (NPA)Cdefined as budgetary support to governments, disbursed in tranches against mutually established conditions reflecting the implementation of critical policy, institutional, and budgetary reforms. Five years of experience with ESS programs in a number of African countries[1] has demonstrated that ESS programs can contribute to systemic educational development. USAID=s efforts have helped lay the foundations for sustainable improvements in governments= capacity to deliver quality primary education equitably. Specifically, reforms have led to increased resources for education in general and to primary education in particular; to improved management practices, including more transparent budgeting, accounting, and personnel systems; to institutionalization of planning, monitoring, and evaluation functions to chart and track the impacts[1] of reform; and to decentralization of management responsibility to encourage greater regional and community involvement in schools.

However, ESS has been controversial. It represents a radical departure from the traditional project mechanism in terms of the scope, definition, and complexity of the Agency=s objectives and operating procedures. Prior to 1988, most education assistance was provided through projects in which USAID alone would design, appraise, implement, supervise, and evaluate interventions of a limited and finite nature, such as provision of inputs to teacher training, production of instructional materials, or curriculum design. Based on the observation that project interventions alone seldom lead to the policy reforms, resource allocations, and administrative reorganization necessary to sustain systemic improvements, USAID shifted its focus from discrete project activities to system-wide restructuring. Instead of providing textbooks as a traditional project might do, for example, ESS works to strengthen the weak links in the education system that lead to textbook shortages.

This new approach required that the Agency simultaneously relinquish control of program implementation while demonstrating that desired changes have taken place on a system-wide basis. Further pressure was added by the congressional mandate that change be measured at the "people level." ESS called for unprecedented collaboration with host governments and with other donors. It required a much deeper understanding of the dynamics of educational reform.

This rapid movement into uncharted territory has provoked debate. Some argue that ESS is not a sound approach to leveraging policy change. Others contend that the ESS strategy may be a good one, but that the Agency is not equipped to manage such radical new ways of providing development assistance. Others, including the authors of this report, maintain that the ESS approach is a sound strategy, but that a

[1] Throughout the paper, the word "impact" has the more general meaning of "effect" and "consequence" rather than the more specific meaning of "people-level effects" described in the DFA.

profound change in management procedures is needed to improve implementation.

This paper is a preliminary examination of what has happened in the relatively brief time since 1988 when USAID first adopted the ESS approach. We examine the impact ESS programs have had thus far on policy, on institutional strengthening, on schools, and on students. In particular, the paper addresses two basic questions that are of obvious import to USAID itself and which can inform other donors about the victories and challenges of supporting broad-based educational reform:

! Is the ESS approach to basic educational assistance in Africa sound? In other words, does ESS make sense in terms of what is known about education and the process of reform? This question is addressed in Part I.

! If the approach is sound, what definitions, expectations, and operating procedures are necessary to implement ESS effectively? In other words, what are the implications of ESS for the way development assistance is carried out? Part II addresses this question, mostly through analysis of USAID=s experiences with ESS.

! Part III concludes with two broad questions: What has been learned from USAID=s ESS experience in 12 African countries? Where does USAID go from here?

Rather than presenting definitive answers to these questions, we hope to contribute to a dialogue on how donors can best contribute to educational development in Africa.

It should be stressed that much of the operational-level learning took place during implementation. Few of the "answers" were known at the outset, and many remain unknown today. Indeed, this paper is part of the process of building knowledge. As a consequence, not all of the examples presented here are positive, though something can be learned from each of them. Some of the ideals are imperfectly realized in practice, and we attempt to be explicit about our assessments and experiences, however controversial they may prove to be.

The paper is organized in three parts. Part I describes the ESS approach and NPA strategy, examining them in light of the research literature of education reform. Part II compares Agency expectations and the actual impacts of ESS programs in Africa, detailing issues of design and management of ESS programs, and exploring the challenges of evaluating systemic education reform. Part III presents early conclusions about the soundness of the approach, its underlying premises, and the conditions necessary to its success. We end with speculations on the direction donor assistance might take in the future, and identify areas of future operational research.

Part I. Is the Education Sector Support Approach Sound?

Chapter 1. What is the Education Sector Support Approach?

This chapter defines and describes the approach to development assistance called Education Sector Support (ESS) programing, along with its primary modality, non-project assistance (NPA). The emergence of this approach is discussed as a response to concerns about the lack of effect and the poor sustainability of traditional forms of development assistance. The historical context of the late 1980s and the U.S. Government=s steps to address the crisis in African education helped determine the character of ESS programs. The chapter continues with a description of the approach as applied in the context of African basic education and concludes with a comparison between project and non-project assistance.

1.1 Defining Education Sector Support and Non-Project Assistance

Education Sector Support (ESS) is a term USAID developed to describe its approach to development assistance in African basic education from 1988 to the present. Six elements characterize the ESS approach. ESS programs:

- support a national sector reform, not a donor program;
- often provide budgetary support conditioned on performance towards policy reform;
- support systemic educational change, rather than focusing on separate components;
- focus on national institutional development to manage the reform process;
- involve donor coordination; and
- are accountable for "people-level" outcomesCstudents= access and performance

NPA refers to the budgetary support component. Money is disbursed to governments in tranches against mutually established conditions reflecting the implementation of key policy, institutional, and budgetary reforms. NPA is an essential component of the ESS approach, but ESS programs involve more than NPA. It is possible, for example, to use an NPA modality without the other defining characteristics of ESS. As used here, ESS refers to an approach evolved by USAID in response to a set of particular historical challenges. It is useful to name the approach to facilitate referencing as well as to underscore the philosophical assumptions about development strategy implied by ESS programs in contrast to those of the project mode of development.

ESS programs generally include traditional project assistance in varying proportions, though, again, ESS programing means more than project assistance. Projectized components consist of technical assistance and training designed to help education ministries build the capacity to better manage the additional resources and to implement other technical elements of the reform. The projects also can contain support to the USAID field missions for managing, monitoring, and evaluating the education programs.

1.2 Emergence of the Education Sector Support Approach

Assigned the task of analyzing the Agency=s recent experience in implementing education programs in Africa, the authors attempted to reconstruct the history that led to the dramatic shift in the magnitude and type of assistance USAID=s Africa Bureau provides to education. There is no readily identifiable path that retraces how the Agency=s education strategy in Africa changed in the mid-1980s. However, it is possible to identify several critical factors that converged to influence the Agency=s thinking about development in Africa and that contributed to the emergence of a drastically different approach to educational assistance. Two broad categories of factors help construct a summary of the shift in USAID thinking: lessons from education project experience, and the policy-orientation of development assistance in the 1980s.

1.2.1 Recognition of the Need for a Systemic Approach

There appears to be increasing agreement that problems in education, as in other sectors, must be addressed through sectoral strategies. A recent review of USAID experience in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean concludes that the complexity and interrelatedness of the problems facing basic education require a system-wide approach to improvement.[2] The report arrives at this conclusion by recognizing the failure of past efforts to make a lasting impact on the functioning of education systems.[3] While donors= education projects may have been successful at improving the specific aspect of education they targeted, it was precisely this targeting, or narrow, component-based vision, that hampered their ability to contribute to the sustainable development of the sector as a whole. A World Bank study of its role in the development of human resources in sub-Saharan Africa reaches a similar conclusion. It concurs that past human resource development projects have failed to promote lasting, system-wide change. The study also notes with approval the recent trend towards adopting a systems approach, with greater emphasis on policy change as necessary for the successful long-term development of the education sector.[4] Both studies agree on three general lessons from past experience:

- the need for policy-level intervention to define the context for development of the education sector;
- the focus on developing the institutions that will serve as the foundation for sustainable capacity to implement policies and programs; and
- the necessity to view the education delivery system as a whole, to work on the package of inputs and institutions, and not to focus simply on individual components.

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2 Ray Chesterfield, 1992. *Basic Education: Review of Experience.* Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

3 The word "impact" is used with its "general" meaning, in contrast to the specific "people-level impacts" mandated by the DFA.

4 World Bank, 1993. *The World Bank=s Role in Human Resource Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Education, Training and Technical Assistance.* Washington, DC: World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department.

1.2.2 Financial Pragmatism

In addition to these lessons, a more pragmatic understanding of the possibilities for educational development began to emerge. While the 1960s and 1970s saw developing countries and donors agree on the need for universal primary education, the harsh economic realities of the 1980s made it obvious that the financial constraints to achieving this were considerable. Following the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, the objective of universal primary education is still espoused, but discussions are framed by what can realistically be financed.

The defining theme of development strategy in Africa during the 1980s was structural adjustment. The central principle of structural adjustment is that macro-economic policy and government institutional capacity define the context within which development does or does not take place, and that it is possible to adjust this context to make it more conducive to economic progress. The stabilizing effects of structural adjustment in the late 1980s have helped establish a context for renewing formal education, and have set the stage for redefining the direction of that development. For example, in countries such as Ghana and Uganda, economic recovery and political stability are enabling those governments to address effectively the rehabilitation of their education systems. Over the past few years, the strategies of adjustment have moved from application to macro-economic and central government policies to sectoral level policies as well. With coordinated donor support, most African education systems are entering a period of adjustment and reform. They are:

- developing more rational program-based and transparent budgets that can be used to leverage an increased share of government spending;

- controlling the expansion of enrollments and unit costs to ensure the financing of a minimum standard of quality in existing institutions; and

- improving administrative systems, which should lead to better management of resources.

USAID=s ESS programs were designed to support these kinds of sectoral reforms, and were essentially an attempt by USAID and the Africa Bureau to link the development of basic education to the fiscal constraints and real resource allocation decisions faced by most sub-Saharan African countries.

It should be stressed that USAID has used NPA as a granting mechanism for some time; Economic Support Fund balance of payments support and commodity import programs, for example, are forms of NPA.[5] However, the last five years have seen a rise in the importance of NPA and, in conjunction with the other characteristics of ESS noted above, the evolution of a comprehensive approach to sectoral assistance in African education.

1.2.3 Renewed Emphasis on Education

Starting in 1988, in response to persistently low indicators of educational development and in recognition of the centrality of human resource development as the foundation for economic and social development,

[5] The first ESS program was, in fact, approved in 1983, in Zimbabwe. The Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST) Sector Assistance Program consisted of a Commodity Import Program (CIP) of US$29 million and US$15.9 million in technical assistance and project-related equipment. The CIP-generated local currency was used to finance some 20 projects in the education sector in support of government efforts to expand and reform its education system.

Congress established a set-aside for education within the foreign assistance appropriations. Not only did the legislation define annual absolute dollar amounts to be spent on education, but it also mandated that 50 percent of the earmark be committed to basic education, and that USAID launch new programs in at least five countries where it did not already have programs. While the earmark set Agency-wide targets, its impact was most evident in Africa, where all the new programs were launched, and where roughly 80 percent of the annual education obligation is made.

These concerns coincided with increasing awareness among other donors and African governments of the crisis in African education. During the 1980s and into the 1990s, African government financing for basic education declined, and the quality of education suffered. In some countries primary enrollment rates have lagged behind population growth, swelling the proportion of illiterates. The average primary education gross enrollment rate for the continent dropped from 79 to 71 percent during the 1980s while total unit expenditure on average for the poorest African countries declined from US$40 per pupil to $25.

The publication of the World Bank's policy paper on education in sub-Saharan Africa focused attention on the crisis facing the continent=s education systems.[6] Most African education systems are characterized by stagnating or declining enrollments, evaporating non-salary expenditures, eroding quality of instruction, and growing inefficiency in resource and personnel management. The World Bank=s policy paper implored African governments and the international donor community to face this crisis and intervene to reverse it. The Bank advocated combined government and donor efforts to develop national policies, programs, and strategies to reform the functioning of education systems.

1.2.4 Commitment to Funding

In the context of these concerns, two special efforts were made to fund new initiatives in African education:

The Special Program of Assistance (SPA)

The Special Program of Assistance (SPA) grew out of the donor community=s commitment to supporting structural adjustment through coordinated contributions to bridge the "financing gap" faced by most countries during periods of adjustment. This meant that USAID and other donors would provide balance of payments financing in support of governments= implementation of adjustment programs. NPA is one mechanism through which USAID could finance this kind of support.

Development Fund for Africa (DFA)

In 1987 Congress, concerned about the failure of development in Africa, was determined to provide a new assistance instrument to USAID. The DFA was the tangible result of a new compact between USAID and Congress on a development approach in Africa. The DFA embraces a series of management principles to guide Agency budgeting, design, and implementation of activities.[7] These include:

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6 World Bank, 1988. *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion*. (World Bank Policy Study). Washington, DC: World Bank.

7 See USAID, 1992. *Fresh Start in Africa: A Report on the First Five Years of the Development Fund for Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Analysis Research and Technical Support.

- working to improve public sector institutions as the most effective means to create an environment conducive to development;
- encouraging the participation of providers and clients by working at all system levels;
- coordinating and cooperating with other donors through mechanisms such as the Special Program of Assistance or the Association for the Development of African Education (DAE); and
- striving to ensure financial, institutional, and environmental sustainability.

Within the context of adjustment, the DFA provided USAID with a secure source of financing to support systemic, policy, and institutional changes, the ultimate effects of which were to be sustainable "people-level" impact (e.g., more children going to school and getting a better education). The education earmark and the DFA generated pressure within USAID to obligate large sums of money on an annual basis. In most African countries, the education sector consumes the greatest share of the government=s recurrent budget. NPA programs in education, which provide general budgetary support (consistent with the theme of the Special Program of Assistance) and lend themselves to substantial annual obligations, were therefore believed to be a relatively easy means of committing DFA funds to the education earmark. The Agency has in fact developed nine new NPA education programs in Africa since 1988.[8]

Thus, the emergence of ESS was a response to several factors: the widespread perception of the failures of traditional projectized assistance; the realities of increasingly constrained budgets; a renewed emphasis on education, especially basic education; and the willingness, even the mandate, to commit relatively large sums of money to basic education in Africa.

1.3 Design of Education Sector Support Programs

ESS programs have been designed on the basis of prior experiences and evaluations of education projects, combined with new thinking about how best to promote sustainable education-system reform. All programs share a focus on broad systemic policy and institutional changes as well as the general objectives of promoting increased, equitable access to better quality basic primary schooling. Within that broad objective, each country=s particular situation shapes the specific policy conditions for financial disbursements. While ESS programs vary in their content and structure, as noted earlier, they share design elements that define the ESS approach.

[8] The most recent ESS program began in Ethiopia at the end of FY1994.

1.3.1 Characteristics

Assistance in Support of National Reform

Primary among the themes is that USAID financing is granted to governments in support of a national program of education sector reform. Intervention is not intended to create a reform, but rather to support one that has been developed and articulated by the government. The education sector reform is placed within the context of overall government economic policy and institutional reform, often as defined in a macro-economic adjustment program. In addition, because sectoral reforms often emphasize inter- and intrasectoral resource allocation, they should be linked to the larger efforts to better manage government revenues and expenditures. Also essential to USAID=s support are government commitments to the policy changes necessary for the reform. Examples of the areas of policy reform supported through ESS include:

- absolute and relative levels of allocation and expenditure;
- policies, statutes and regulations governing personnel;
- policies setting standards for student admission and advancement; and
- priorities for planning and program budgeting.

The nature and quality of the reform may vary across countries in terms of the clarity with which it is defined, the technical quality of the information and analysis, the participation leading to the reform, the comprehensiveness and nature of proposed changes, and the degree of government commitment. These variations in the policy environment have a determining effect on the progress of ESS program implementation and impact.

Conditioned Assistance

A second element often included in ESS programs is budgetary support conditioned on performance on mutually established terms. A USAID grant in support of a government education sector reform is divided into tranches corresponding to the number of years in the program (from three to nine). The disbursement of each tranche is conditioned on the government meeting *a priori* negotiated performance standards, collectively referred to as "conditionality." In general, conditions precedent to tranche disbursement serve as leverage points for advancing policy changes, benchmarks of progress, and demonstrations of government commitment. The conditions are intended to identify essential elements of reform without which the overall program cannot succeed.

Much but not all of the money disbursed through ESS programs is in the form of NPA, as shown in Table 1.1. Of the $468 million of USAID education assistance in Africa, $308 million (66 percent) is in the form of NPA.

Table 1.1: Education Support Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa[9]

Country	Financing (US$ Million)				Dates	
	NPA	PA	Total	% NPA	Start	End
Mali	3.0	17.0	20.0	**15**	1989	1995
Ghana	32.0	3.0	35.0	**91**	1990	1995
Guinea	22.3	5.7	28.0	**80**	1990	1995
Lesotho	18.6	6.4	25.0	**74**	1991	1997
Malawi	14.0	6.0	20.0	**70**	1991	1996
Benin	50.0	7.5	57.5	**87**	1991	1996
Namibia	35.0	0.5	35.5	**99**	1991	1996
Uganda	83.0	25.0	108.0	**77**	1992	2002
Ethiopia	50.0	30.0	80.0	**63**	1995	2002
Swaziland		**6.9**	**6.9**	**0**	**1989**	**1996**
South Africa (two projects)		**39.5**	**39.5**	**0**	**1986 1992**	**1996 1998**
Botswana		**12.6**	**12.6**	**0**	**1991**	**1997**
TOTAL	307.9	160.1	468.0	**66**		

Systemic Reform

A third characteristic of ESS programs is the Agency=s adoption of a systems approach to educational change, in which reform of the entire education system is seen as necessary for sustainable improvement. This contrasts with earlier attempts to provide project assistance to develop separate components of the education system (e.g., curriculum development and instructional materials, school construction, and teacher training). With the focus on selective elements of overall system reform, the importance of the policies which govern the system becomes apparent. Agency guidelines governing the application of NPA are specific on this point, stating:

[9] Three examples illustrate the use of project assistance to promote systemic reform. South Africa is a unique case, because the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act barred USAID from providing support to the South African government. Consequently, the education program in South Africa has consisted of projects designed to channel resources and support to the non-governmental sector. By African standards, Botswana=s education system has made substantial progress, with USAID and other donor project support, in implementing sustainable, system-wide reforms. At present, the sectoral policy and institutional environments are well positioned to enhance the continued improvement of education at the primary and secondary levels. In such an environment the caveats normally associated with project assistance are lifted because the government itself has sufficiently defined sectoral policy and strategy so that project interventions feed into a sustainable system. This being the case, Botswana serves as the exception that proves the NPA ruleCthat a sound sectoral policy environment is a key to successful development. In Swaziland, the previous education projects had identified specific areas where institutional strengthening was needed to ensure implementation of government policy reforms. The present project targets those areas for capacity building and, having a point of entry in the education sector, has engaged the government in effective policy dialogue.

> The DFA=s legislative history [the congressional directives concerning use of DFA funds] makes it clear that non-project assistance under the DFA can be used only to support sectoral policy reform programs...The purpose of such reform programs must be to alleviate the policy constraints impeding longer term development and growth at the sectoral level.[10]

Institutional Development

ESS programs focus on institutional development within the sector. The education system consists of a complex of institutions with different administrative, managerial and technical responsibilities. These institutions are the means by which policy is translated into operational programs. They include finance and accounting, planning and information, management services, personnel and teaching services, supervision and in-service training, curriculum development, instructional materials, tests and examinations, school facilities and equipment, etc. Reform of the education sector, if it is to be sustainable, requires the coordinated development of host country capacity for managing all aspects of these operations.

Donor Coordination

Unlike a project approach, in which each donor can operate within a specific program area, ESS involves a review of the government=s reform strategy and financing, including support from all major donors. Cooperation among donors can take the form of co-financing, where major donors join in the design of the program, including conditionality, and participate with government in tranche reviews. A less structured form of coordination is regular donor sector review meetings, in some cases convened and chaired by a ministry of education. Whatever its form, coordination of donor support and inputs is essential if African nations are to successfully manage sectoral reform programs. Too often donor financing of "pet" projects has contributed to the compartmentalization of the sector, in fact preventing comprehensive systemic development.

Accountability for People-Level Outcomes

An explicit directive of both the DFA legislation and NPA guidelines is that programs be evaluated on the basis of people-level impacts. This focus on people-level measures of outcomes is a sixth characteristic of ESS programs. USAID=s support of education reform is therefore ultimately accountable for outcomes such as an increased proportion of children going to school, finishing school without repeating grades, and leaving school having learned something useful.

1.3.2 Policy Objectives and Content

USAID=s education programs address, albeit in different ways, issues relating to financial sustainability, improved quality, increased access and equity, and institutional or administrative reform[11]. ESS programs are expected to support government policy reforms in basic education.[12] Table 1.2 summarizes the policy content of USAID=s education programs in Africa. Analysis of ESS program policy content indicates that despite the variety of policy-level interventions, certain general characteristics are discernible.

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10 USAID, 1990. *Revised Africa Bureau NPA Guidance*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa.

11 For a summary of the Africa Bureau=s education programs, see USAID, 1993. *Overview of AID Basic Education Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Bureau for Africa, Office of Analysis, Research, and Technical Support, Technical

Almost all ESS programs address sectoral priorities as expressed in government resource allocation decisions. Budget and/or expenditure targets, as conditions for tranches of budgetary support, range from the general (adequate resources to cover the cost of the reform) to the specific (unit expenditure amounts) and cover inter- as well as intrasectoral allocations. NPA provides a modality for addressing the financial sustainability of sectoral financing by working with a ministry of education to plan and budget for the required level of activity. This often involves increasing or stabilizing education=s share of the government budget and, within that, the share allocated to primary education.

Programs often include support for government reforms that are intended to devolve authority and responsibility to regional or sub-regional levels. The aim of these reforms is to improve the quality and efficiency of management. These policies may also seek to secure greater community involvement in education at the school level, or to promote private sector initiatives in the provision of education. Reforms intended to increase efficiency address strengthening planning and administrative operations, as well as supporting the reorganization of ministry structures and functions and the improved use of physical facilities (e.g., double-shifting in schools or increasing intakes to teacher training facilities). USAID provides assistance to reorganization, decentralization, improved collection and use of information, planning, budget preparation and expenditure control, ministry of education staff development, as well as community participation in school finance and management. Policies governing teacher recruitment and assignment, staffing norms, career structures, etc., are also targeted as means to increase efficiency in the use of teachers and staff, and to improve ministry personnel management. The internal efficiency of primary schools is addressed through policies aimed at reducing repetition and dropout rates.

USAID=s education efforts support increased access in almost all education programs, primarily through targeting previously neglected areas or populations (e.g., girls). USAID's education programs support policies aimed at expanding the opportunity for schooling in those countries that place priority on overcoming low access rates. Another policy preoccupation is the equitable provision of educational services. A project may envisage policy reforms intended to enhance girls= access and retention, improve distribution of resources between urban and rural areas, or target previously disadvantaged regions or populations. Finally, USAID supports a number of quality-enhancing objectives including curriculum development, materials development and distribution, teacher training (pre- and/or in-service), student assessment, and pedagogical supervision.

Paper No. 1). Washington, DC: USAID, Office of Sustainable Development.

[12] Policy as defined here includes centrally-determined, system- or government-wide decisions that establish the framework for sectoral development. Specifically, this includes formal policy declarations, ministerial acts, civil service statutes, budgetary allocations, or other governmental statements of priority or strategy.

Table 1.2: Policy Issues in USAID=s ESS Programs in Africa

Country	Main Policy Issues
Mali	! Redirect resources from higher and secondary education subsidies to permit expansion and improvement of basic education. ! Facilitate expansion through improved personnel management (staffing patterns and recruitment).
Ghana	! Increase amount of budget available for non-salary quality-enhancing inputs such as textbooks and the development of criteria referenced testing. ! Develop and implement pilot programs to improve equity.
Guinea	! Expand the provision of basic education through more efficient use of teaching personnel (redeployment) and of infrastructure (multigrade teaching and double shifting). Improve quality through increasing non-salary expenditure. ! Develop policies to promote rural/urban and gender equity.
Lesotho	! Greatly increase and maintain budget level for education, with 70 percent of new resources going to improve the quality and efficiency of primary education. ! Reform laws governing non-governmental ownership of schools.
Malawi	! Increase overall budget allocation for primary education. ! Improve efficiency by developing strategy to address repetition and by making greater use of existing facilities through multigrade teaching and double shifting and increasing enrollment in teacher training colleges. ! Promote girls access through targeted fee waivers and development of gender-sensitive curricula.
Benin	! Develop a minimum standard for basic quality education as a tool to ensure equitable allocation of increased level of non-salary inputs. ! Promote decentralization of administrative and budgetary responsibility.
Namibia	! Consolidate and integrate regional education authorities and develop basic standard-of-quality tools to guide equitable reallocation of qualitative improvements.
Uganda	! Improve quality by targeting resources for textbooks and upgrading the qualifications of the teaching force. ! Manage teaching personnel more efficiently. ! Reform teaching profession. ! Improved teacher in-service and support
Ethiopia	! Increase share of budget for education, and within education budget, increase budget for primary education. Increase expenditure on non-salary inputs for primary schools. ! Reform preservice teacher training and terms and conditions of service for teachers and school directors. ! Manage teaching personnel more efficiently. ! Support decentralization.

1.3.3 Building Institutional Capacity for Ongoing Reform

Under the project model of assistance, the targeted objective of USAID=s intervention was defined by technical output (e.g., numbers of teachers trained or textbooks delivered). Unfortunately, those outputs were often pursued at the expense of institutional capacity-building. A project would set up a system for delivering training or developing an information system, and USAID could claim victory when project objectives were met, whether or not the project had fostered any permanent change in a ministry=s capacity. Under the ESS approach, the targeted objective is now defined not just as the output itself, but as an institution capable of achieving and sustaining the desired technical output, with its recurrent operational costs covered by the sectoral budget.

As all ESS programs involve substantial sums of money, the development of budgeting and financial management institutions and capacities are critical aspects of intervention. Other institutions and capacities are targeted depending on the programatic focus of the reform. For instance, where the emphasis is on in-service teacher training, teacher training institutions, such as the National Teacher Training College in Lesotho, are strengthened. Table 1.3 below identifies the institutions and capacities targeted in each of the Africa Bureau=s ESS programs.

Institutions and capacities are reinforced either through a companion project providing direct long- or short-term technical support and training, or through policy reform and conditionality. For example, many programs include conditions requiring the development of an expenditure tracking system capable of disaggregating budget data by the nature, category, and education level of expenditures. In addition, capacities may be strengthened by providing, through project assistance, technical advisors in the area of financial management.

Table 1.3: Institutions Targeted in USAID Education Programs

Institutional Focus	MAL	GHA	GUI	LES	MLW	BEN	NAM	UGA	ETH	BOT	SWA
Budget and Financial Management			o	o		o			o		o
Planning and EMIS[13]	o			o	o	o	o		o		o
Structure and Organization of MOE			o	o		o	o				o
Decentralized Administration	o	o	o	o		o			o		o
Pre-Service Teacher Training											
In-Service Teacher Training and Support	o	o		o	o	o		o	o o	o	o o
Curriculum Development					o	o	o		o	o	o
Textbook Development and Distribution	o	o		o	o	o		o	o	o	o
Student Assessment	o	o		o		o				o	o
School Construction	o		o		o						

1.3.4 ESS Program Design Considerations

Within the general framework of the ESS approach and NPA guidelines, the design of ESS programs requires making several sets of choices, as outlined in Table 1.4.[14] The optimal choicesCfinance levels, proportions of non-project and project assistance, the nature and type of conditionality, the nature and extent of project and technical assistanceCare likely to depend on several factors, including the stage of development in terms of access and quality of a country=s education system, the history of USAID=s involvement in the education sector, and the extent of the government=s commitment to reform.

13 EMIS: Education Management Information System.

14 Design considerations are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 1.4: Considerations in the Design of ESS Programs

Level of Financing	ESS programs require substantially greater levels of financing than traditional projects. The amount of funding depends essentially on two factors, the overall balance of payments situation, and the funding requirements of implementing a reform program in the education sector. Use of NPA by definition means the program will contribute to bridging a country=s balance of payments "gap." Because DFA guidelines stipulate that NPA funds must be used in support of sectoral objectives, the funding level must also depend on the anticipated changes in education sector expenditures associated with reformed and improved delivery of basic education.
NPA-PA Split	All of USAID=s ESS programs use project and non-project assistance in a coordinated, complementary fashion. The balance between NPA and PA depends on the stage of reform at which USAID is intervening. The extent to which sectoral reform policy is in place and key institutional capacity is established determines how much budgetary support the sector can absorb and how much technical assistance would be required to help develop or reinforce capacity.
Policy Objectives	USAID=s overall objectives in education in Africa are to support the sustainable increase and more equitable access to quality basic education as well as more efficient delivery. However, the reform strategy for promoting those objectives differs from country to country. In Guinea, increased access is targeted through policy reforms aimed at more efficient deployment of teachers. In Ghana, reforms in student assessment are intended to highlight issues of improved quality. Depending on which issue is most pressing and which policy reform strategy seems best suited for the circumstances, different policy objectives will emerge in different cases.
Conditionality	All programs include conditionality targeting education=s share of government expenditure and primary education=s share of that. Additional conditions will be determined on the basis of the key policy objectives agreed to with the country and deemed suited to the particular circumstances of that country=s reform objectives.
Nature of PA	The repertoire of project assistance has usually consisted of technical advisors, training, commodities, and logistical support. Recent programs have added special funding mechanisms to allow resources to be targeted more directly to schools and communities. This has also enabled USAID to work through non-governmental and governmental channels simultaneously. The combination of these elements depends primarily on which institutions need reinforcement.
Areas of TA	Aside from the usual institutional analyses that indicate the areas for technical assistance, ESS programs tend to need different accompanying technical assistance depending on where in the process of reform a country finds itself. In the early stages of reform, almost all countries require technical assistance in financial management, planning and information management. This is to ensure that the basic capacity is developed to permit rational planning for and management of additional resources and the development of capacity to monitor and learn from changes brought about through reform. In later stages, TA could focus on specific technical areas essential to improvements in the sector, such as curriculum, testing, or teacher training.

Stage of Development of Education System

Assistance to countries with severely underdeveloped education systems focuses on meeting the challenge of broadening access equitably and within the constraints of resource limitations (e.g., Guinea and Mali). Often the issues that most dominate regard efficiency and quality—how to make most efficient use of available resources and how to expand access without compromising quality, the former contributing substantially to resolving the latter.

In countries where education systems are well developed, assistance may focus on consolidating and improving quality while reaching out to the most marginalized populations (e.g., Benin, Ghana, and Lesotho).

The design of ESS programs also depends on the government's institutional capacity to manage and administer public education and the resources that are available. Capacity, resources, and level of development are all highly correlated—richer countries tend to have better administered, more universal, and better quality basic education systems (e.g., Botswana, Swaziland, and Namibia).

USAID Experience

The focus of USAID's assistance in a country is also influenced by the length of time USAID has worked in the education sector and at what point in its experience with education the ESS program was designed. In countries where USAID has a long experience of projectized assistance, ESS programs can build on that experience. In some cases ESS programs continue the projectized mode (e.g., Botswana and Swaziland) as a way to improve specific targeted elements of the education sector. In Lesotho, the ESS program follows a large-scale education project. The ESS program seeks to promote the sustainability of resource allocation, policy change, and institutional development initiated by the earlier project. All ESS activities derive from the government's reform plans.

Early ESS programs attempted to set conditionality for all tranches at the outset (e.g., Guinea and Mali). These programs had a lifespan of three years. More recent designs cover longer time frames (6 to 10 years) and use a more flexible approach to defining conditionality.

ESS programs also differ in other aspects, as summarized in Table 1.5. On average, about 74 percent of the funding in these nine education programs is through NPA, with the lowest share being 15 percent in Mali, and the highest, 99 percent, in Namibia. Only Guinea and Uganda use NPA to repay debt, while all the other programs provide cash transfers as general balance of payments support. Two programs use special accounts for earmarking local currency for the education sector, Ghana and Lesotho. Project assistance in all the ESS programs conforms to the usual configuration of long- and short-term technical assistance, training, and some equipment purchases. Contractual arrangements for technical assistance range from Mission-based management of a number of personal service contractors and buy-ins to existing centrally-funded USAID projects. All the countries except Guinea use project funds to hire a U.S. personal services contractor program coordinator to facilitate Mission management of the program. Some of the operational implications of these variations in design are discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 1.5: Variation in Design Elements of Basic Education NPA Programs

Country	NPA/PA Split	NPA Financing		Project Assistance (PA)				PA Contract Mechanism /f
			SPEC. ACCT./a	Lg-tm/b	Sh-tm/c	Trng/d	USAID mgt/e	
Mali	15% 85%	General BOP /g	No	5			1	Buy-in to Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project (ABEL)
Ghana	91% 9%	General BOP	Yes	B	33	48/h	1	PA Contract: Institutional Contract (Mitchell Group)
Guinea	80% 20%	Debt Re-payment	No	2	85	360/i	B	Buy-in to Improving the Efficiency of Education Systems Project (IEES)
Lesotho	74% 26%	General BOP	Yes	4	35	150/j	1	Institutional Contract (Ohio University)
Malawi	70% 30%	General BOP	No	4/k	B		1	ABEL
Benin	87% 13%	General BOP	No	2	46	/l	1	Mission-based IQC
Namibia	99% 1%	General BOP	No	B	B	B	1	/m
Uganda	77% 23%	Debt	No	5	194	/o	1	Institutional Contract (Academy for Educational Development)
Ethiopia	77% 23%	General BOP	No	13	123/n 212/o	484/p	2	Buy-in bridge to Institutional Contract (to be decided)

a/Local currency generated from USAID grant is earmarked for education, and controlled separately from the sectoral budget.
b/Number of long-term technical assistants working directly in support of education sector activity.
c/Person-months of short-term technical consulting, including locally hired consultants in some cases.
d/Person-months of training.
e/Number of personal services contractors working as program or project managers for the USAID Mission.
f/Contracting mechanisms used for short- and long-term TA. Buy-ins refer to centrally funded USAID projects.
g/Balance of Payments Support.
h/Includes 18 person-months of in-country training.
i/The equivalent of 20 U.S. masters degrees.
j/Seven U.S. masters degrees, and 24 person-months of study tours in Africa and the U.S.
k/Long-term technical assistance is used intermittently (for two to four months at a time).
l/Project includes a lump sum dollar amount for unspecified training.
m/The project does not have any technical assistance. The Namibian government has contracted directly with Florida State University for long-term consulting.
n/intentional

o/local
p/includes 14 U.S. MAs and 48 person-months of short-term technical assistance

1.4 Conclusion: From Projects to Programs

USAID=s adoption of the ESS approach to educational development in Africa represents a major shift in the philosophy and practice of development assistance, as summarized in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6: Comparison of Project Assistance and ESS Approaches to Educational Development

	Project Assistance	Education Sector Support
Primary Purpose	Donor provides resources & technical assistance to fill discrete need in education sector	Donor provides resources & technical assistance in support of a national reform
Nature of "Problem"	The component of education system identified as a "problem"	Education system itself
Criteria for Success	Problem is "solved"	System is capable of identifying and solving its own problems
Levels of Impact to be Measured	Project; project beneficiaries	Multiple levels: Project 6 System 6 Student 6 Wider population
Time Required to Achieve Results	1 to 5 years	Project (1-5 yrs) 6 System (1-10 yrs) 6 Student (3-13 yrs) 6 Wider population (15-35 yrs)
Who "Owns," Manages Implementation?	Donor	Host country government
Who Participates?	Technical experts in project area; possible participation of project beneficiaries	Technical experts in project area ! Major stakeholders in host country ! Implementors of reform ! Those in host country who carry out activity in future ! Other donors
Management Requirements	Tight control & accountability over inputs, process, outcomes	Mutual agreement on objectives, means, and indicators of success; will and ability to shift course as conditions change to achieve objectives; operational trust.
Key Concepts	Technical rationality, inputs, outcomes, accountability	Sustainability, participation, & ownership
Challenges	Determining best technical solution; Implementing the "best" technical plan	Donor willingness to turn over implementation; difficulty of specifying

	Project Assistance	Education Sector Support
		impacts or time required to achieve impacts *a priori*; donor willingness to share credit with other donors; donor willingness to give reform time to go through necessary stages.

It is worth noting differences in the primary mode of operation in the two approaches. The project assistance approach is concerned primarily with provision: donors provide resources, technical expertise, and solutions. The ESS approach also provides these essentials, but its primary focus is on enabling or empowering host country governments to carry out a reform they have identified. The view is toward long-range sustainability, and the locus of control gradually shifts from donor to host country. Such a change, however logical in theory, requires learning, on the part of donor and host country alike. This paper is about that learning process.

Chapter 2. Is Education Sector Support a Sound Approach to Educational Development?

This chapter asks whether the Education Sector Support (ESS) approach is sound based on current research, knowledge, and experience in education reform. Its purpose is to provide a critical overview of the assumptions inherent to the ESS approach. We believe that ESS programs are likely to be effective to the extent that these assumptions hold.

The chapter begins by noting the goals of educational reform. It then presents a framework, represented by two diagrams of the elements and processes of systematic education reform. The central part of the chapter draws out the assumptions implicit in the ESS approach and critically examines these assumptions in light of research and actual country conditions. The chapter concludes with a set of preliminary lessons learned, drawing on experience from USAID=s basic education activities in Africa.

2.1 The Complex Nature of Educational Reform

The goal of USAID=s support of basic education reform is to increase the number of children entering and completing primary school and to improve the quality of their learning in ways that are efficient and sustainable. This goal has five dimensions to which each country, and each ESS program, gives varying emphasis, depending on the country=s level of development and other contextual factors. These dimensions are to:

- increase access to and participation in basic education;
- increase equity;
- increase the quality of schooling;
- increase managerial, internal, and external efficiency;[15] and
- ensure the sustainability of the reforms past the period of donor support.

The contexts and processes that lead to significant change on these dimensions are enormously complex. To examine the question of whether USAID=s ESS approach is sound, we use a framework that highlights the major elements and processes that characterize systemic and enduring educational reform. This framework is based on a wide body of literature that draws on analysis of domestic and international experience in educational change. The framework is represented by two figures: one on the context and elements of reform, and one on the process of reform.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the economic, political, and cultural context of reform, the elements that must ultimately be changed for systemic reform, and the levels at which change must take place.[16] As the figure suggests, the process of reform is concerned with the relationship between change at one level and its impact on another. For example, reform is concerned with how changes in curriculum materials development and distribution affect the operations of regional and district offices (in terms of management, training, and supervisory functions) and the operations of the schools and classrooms.

[15] Internal efficiency concerns school outcomes and aims at having low wastage and good academic achievement at sustainable levels of expenditure (see Douglas M. Windham, 1990. *Indicators of Educational Effectiveness and Efficiency*. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, IEES Project). External efficiency concerns the relation between the costs of education and its contribution to social and economic well-being, including population growth, health and nutrition, productive activity, employment, social participation, and quality of the environment.

[16] Central sources for the concepts represented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 include: Michael G. Fullan with S. Steigelbauer, 1991.

The diagram represents the government and ministry of education, with its departments and regions, embedded within a political, economic, and cultural milieu. The political factors affecting the potential for education reform include: the environment for public participation in policy debate, freedom of association and of the press, the transparency of government policies and programs, the human rights record, and actual and perceived government integrity or corruption. Economic factors include whether the economy is improving or declining, as indicated by changes in per capita GDP. Shifts towards open markets, deregulation, open currency exchange, and increases in foreign and domestic investments are all positive indicators that the economy may be able to support and sustain systemic education reform. Cultural values and ideology include religious and indigenous ethnic traditions as well as institutional and school cultures. The influence of the international community, and especially a former colonial power, is a key feature of education systems. Donor and financing agencies play a crucial role in education reforms, both indirectly through macro-economic structural adjustment policies, and directly through education sector assessments and programs.

Within this milieu, an education reform will ultimately have to influence the orientation, functions, staffing, financing, and operations of the ministry=s institutions and programs, and through these, the work of regional and district offices. To achieve the desired outcomes of increased access, attainment, and learning achievement, a national reform must affect the quality of schools and classrooms. In this regard, the community plays a key role, apart from ministry inputs. Community demand for education influences participation rates, whatever the supply of schooling from the government. Children=s health, well-being, and readiness for learning have a profound effect on achievement. Likewise parental support and community leadership contribute powerfully to effective schooling.

The New Meaning of Educational Change. New York: Teachers College; *Educational Leadership.* (Special issue on Systemic Reform). 51:1; John Craig, 1990. *Comparative African Experiences in Implementing Educational Policies*. Washington, DC: World Bank; Luis Crouch, et al., 1993. *Policy Dialogue and Reform in the Education Sector*. Washington, DC: Research Triangle Institute, for USAID, Latin America and Caribbean Bureau; Donors to African Education, 1993. *Issues in the Implementation of Education Sector Programs and Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Paris: Donors to African Education; R.G. Havelock and Michael A. Huberman, 1977. *Solving Educational Problems: The Theory and Reality of Innovation in Developing Countries*. Paris: UNESCO; Ward Heneveld, 1994. *Planning and Monitoring the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (AFTHR Technical Note No. 14). Washington, DC: World Bank.

Insert Figure 2.1 (p22: Basic Education in Africa)

Figure 2.2 represents the education reform cycle. Education reform may follow a variety of paths and seldom follows a logical progression from one phase to the next. The evidence for this is that major educational reforms in Africa are generally initiated by forces external to the education system itself, either by significant political changes or donor initiatives.[17]

When education reform becomes an important national issue, a "policy dialogue" develops, often formalized in a national commission or task force. The dialogue process includes analyzing the existing situation, generating policy options, and evaluating and negotiating policy choices and decisions.[18] The reform process requires that the policy vision and commitment be elaborated, disseminated, and become incorporated in plans, budgets, and organizational changes. These changes are reflected, when the reform is effective, at institutional, departmental, regional, local, and school levels. A critical aspect of the process of reform is the effectiveness of leadership throughout the system in advocating the reform, and the evaluation by the implementors within the system (staff and teachers) of the changes. The outcome of a reform is represented, ultimately, in the increased attainment and achievement of learners. Society=s judgment about the efficacy of that learning is a major input into the policy dialogue process. [19]

[17] This is well documented in: David Evans, 1994. *Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*. Washington, DC: USAID, Donors to African Education; Wadi Haddad, 1994. *The Dynamics of Education Policymaking: Case Studies of Burkina Faso, Jordan, Peru, and Thailand*. Washington, DC: World Bank, EDI.

[18] This process often manifests itself in a formal document, such as a government white paper.

[19] This cycle is well represented by recent events in Ghana, where the poor performance of pupils on national assessments and examinations has led to a new cycle of policy dialogue, review of options, and strategies for change. Government of Ghana, Ministry of Education, 1994. *Towards Learning for All: Basic Education in Ghana to the Year 2000.*

Insert Figure 2.2 (p24, Basic Education in Africa)

The framework represented by Figures 2.1 and 2.2 informs the analysis of assumptions implied by the ESS approach to change. The value of this analysis is underscored by the frequent experienceCdomestically and internationallyCthat education reform represents, in the words of Samuel Johnson, the triumph of hope over experience. If our current policy reform efforts are to overcome the limitations of previous education activities in Africa, we must gain a realistic view of what to expect, how to move from one stage to the next, and how to identify and articulate short-term victories on the way toward long-term goals.

2.2 Assumptions of the Education Sector Support Approach to Reform

As discussed in Chapter 1, the ESS approach is characterized by six elements that support educational change:

- Support of a national policy (not a donor program) of education sector reform;
- Provision of budgetary support conditioned on performance towards that policy reform;
- Focus on systemic educational change, rather than on discrete components;
- Emphasis on development of national institutions to manage the reform process;
- Donor coordination; and
- Accountability for "people-level" outcomes.

More specifically, the Education Sector Support (ESS) approach implies certain assumptions about the process of educational change and the role of donors in supporting it (see Table 2.1). Some of these assumptions are inherent in the relationship between donors and governments, some are implied by the nature of the NPA modality, and some are necessary if ESS is to contribute to educational reform. Some of these assumptions derive from our understanding of how educational reform takes place. Others concern USAID=s role in that process as expressed in the design of its ESS programs.

2.2.1 Assumptions about National Policy Reform

Assumption 1: The existing education policy environment is tractable and can be improved through better advice and the introduction of rational systems within the education sector.

ESS programs focus on what can be done within the education sector. However, as Figure 2.1 showed, much of the effectiveness of activities within education depends on forces outside the sector. For example, an education system is unlikely to sustain a large-scale reform in a country where the economy is in decline. A declining economy not only shrinks the real value of recurrent budgetsCaffecting the supply of instructional materials and the real value of teachers= salariesCit also leads to increasing underemployment and unemployment, which undermines public confidence in the value of formal education. Similarly, while policy dialogue is clearly a critical element in the reform of basic education, a non-democratic, inequitable political system will diminish the scope and quality of this process, undermining the possibility for sustainable policy reform.

As noted, the education system is embedded in the larger society, and educational reform is shaped by macro socioeconomic conditions. And while these concepts are widely acknowledged, program design rarely reflects the extent to which ESS and other programs are affected by outside forces.

Table 2.1: Assumptions Necessary for Effective ESS

National Policy Reform

Table 2.1: Assumptions Necessary for Effective ESS

1. The existing education policy environment is tractable, and can be improved through better advice and the introduction of rational systems within the education sector.
2. The government wants reform; the objectives of that reform are clearly defined; and key stakeholders, donors (including USAID), and the government share these objectives.
Budgetary Support & Conditionality
3. Meaningful policy change is expressed through budgetary allocations, and the prevailing patterns of resource allocation need reforming.
4. USAID, alone or in collaboration with other donors, can leverage needed change with budgetary support combined with conditionality.
5. The government will continue the process of change and the pattern of resource allocation obtained under ESS in the absence of external financing and conditionality.
Systems Approach & Focus on Institutional Development
6. Institutional capacity can be developed simultaneously with the implementation of a reform program.
Donor Coordination
7. The major donors share a vision of the educational reform, interpret program strategies and conditionality consistently, and use the same language to articulate expectations to reinforce program implementation.
Process of Educational Reform
8. The nature, sequence, and timing of policy, institutional, and people-level changes cannot be defined at the design stage.
9. Measurable changes will occur during program life.

The second part of this assumption is that education policy can be improved with better advice, and "rational" systems must take account of the government=s political and organizational orientation and capacity. Governments and bureaucrats may make decisions on the basis of "political" or "bureaucratic" rather than "technical" rationality. For example, reallocation of financing in Mali away from oversubsidized higher education to underfinanced primary education may seem rational in terms of equity and efficiency. However, the death of a previous education minister at the hands of rebellious university students creates an obvious "disincentive" that future ministers will find difficult to ignore. Similarly, the offer of donor financing, coupled with conditionality related to policy reform, often persuades sectoral leaders to articulate a reform they might otherwise not promote.

The validity of this assumptionCthat educational reform can be promoted through rational decision-makingCmust be supported by analysis of the political, economic, and institutional conditions, with sensitivity to historical forces and trends of change. If the trends are negative, education sector change is unlikely.

Assumption 2: The government wants reform; the objectives of that reform are clearly defined; and key stakeholders, donors (including USAID), and the government share these objectives.

Educational reform requires commitment, clarity, and leadership. Commitment must come not only from within the sector but from the entire nation. It must flow from an appreciation of the central role of human resources in national development and of the strategic importance of basic education. Commitment is needed for several reasons. Budgetary allocations and personnel policies and practices are not solely controlled by education ministries, but are largely determined by politically central institutions such as the cabinet, the ministry of planning and finance, and the civil service commission. Effective reform requires cooperation from actors throughout government. Support can be mobilized through policy dialogue centered around analysis of education program strategies, including financing and organization.[20] This process is often supported by the technical analysis provided by an education sector assessment.[21]

In addition to commitment, clarity is essential to effective reform. Indeed, a good test of the efficacy of a reform policy is the degree to which those within the education systemCfrom the schools to the central ministryCunderstand the policy. The various actors involved in implementation need to be clear about the goals of the reform, the responsibilities of different parties, and the ways in which progress will be measured and accounted for.

Educational reform requires the leadership of key actors in the ministry of education itself, who must communicate with those who will implement and those who will be affected by the reform.[22] Effective reform policies are articulated by top ministry leaders directly speaking to communities, teachers, administrators, and professionalsCby going to the field, and by using radio, newspapers, and other media to present the reform and the policies of change.[23]

Ministries of education, at central and local levels, have not been notably successful as managers of reform. The bureaucratic culture tends to reward those who maintain the status quo, and not the innovators.[24] The question is how to develop an organizational climate that rewards key players for effectively managing and sustaining reform. This is not an absolute condition, but a dynamic one: is the environment that must enable reform improving or worsening? External assistance may be wasted in a climate unfavorable to reform.

The validity of this assumptionCthat the objectives of an educational reform are established, understood, and believed in by government and key stakeholders (including donors and USAID)Cis doubted in many countries.

2.2.2 Assumptions Related to Budgetary Support and Conditionality

[20] See Luis Crouch, et al., 1993. *Policy Dialogue and Reform in the Education Sector*. Washington, DC: Research Triangle Institute, for USAID, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

[21] Improving the Efficiency of Education Systems Project, 1986. *Education and Human Resources Sector Assessment Training Manual*. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, Learning Systems Institute.

[22] R.G. Havelock and Michael A. Huberman, 1977. *Solving Educational Problems: The Theory and Reality of Innovation in Developing Countries*. Paris: UNESCO.

[23] See Beverly L. Anderson, 1993. "The Stages of Systemic Change," *Educational Leadership*. (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)), 51:1 and Jacques Hallak, 1992. *Managing Schools for Educational Quality and Equity: Finding the Proper Mix to Make it Work*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP.

[24] See John Craig, 1990. *Comparative African Experiences in Implementing Educational Policies*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Assumption 3: Meaningful policy change is expressed through budgetary allocations, and the prevailing patterns of resource allocation need reforming.

This assumption is implicit in the budgetary support component of ESS programs and is explicit in the conditions relating to resource allocations. The rationale is that policy priorities are reflected in how government apportions funds inter- and intrasectorally. The implicit hypothesis is that existing patterns of resource allocation are inefficient and/or inequitable, and that sector reform depends on adjusting allocations to the "right" mix.

The idea that the right mix is known is also implicit in this assumption. The conventional wisdom over the last decade has been that social rates of return are highest for primary education, especially for girls. This implies that governments should shift resources toward primary education and away from higher education. However, beyond this general principle, rules of thumb and regional averages have been used to determine the percentages of the budget that go to the education sector, and within education, to primary schooling. A more systematic means to determine optimal funding levels needs to be developed, as well as the capacity to evaluate expenditure patterns on a continuous basis and reassess targets.

From the perspective of systemic educational reform, Assumption 3 is a necessary but not sufficient condition for positive change. Most policy analysts agree that basic education should receive a larger share of education resources in many African countries. However, additional resources are only part of a comprehensive approach to improved access and learning. The point is not just that the education sector needs more resources, but that these resources must be managed in ways that lead to better results in schools and classrooms.

Assumption 4: USAID, alone or in collaboration with other donors, can leverage needed change with budgetary support and conditionality.

Annual disbursement of budgetary support is the most significant input in the logical frameworks of all but one of USAID=s ESS programs. The provision of this money permits the government to increase primary education expenditures, and it also gives USAID a voice in policy discussions. USAID=s prerogatives (which, as stated above, are assumed to be congruent with those of the government) are expressed in the performance conditions that govern the release of funds. It is assumed that releasing funds only when conditions are met helps the government make the policy decisions required to implement its reform. An implied assumption of the Agency=s budgetary support is that the amount disbursed should correlate positively with the amount of reform occurring in the sector, as well as with the value of the benefits the reform produces. There is likely to exist a level of financing below which budgetary support loses its power to influence policy changes. It is important to understand the relative contribution that USAID funds make toward the total financing of basic education. While USAID funding may reach significant levels in some cases, the Agency typically disburses less than ten percent of governments= recurrent budgets.[25]

Based on the preliminary experience with ESS programs, Assumption 4 appears to be valid when the political leadership of the government views the conditionality as supportive of its own reform agenda. When this is not the case, the assumption does not hold, and focus shifts to meeting the letter rather than the spirit of conditionality to ensure the release of funds.[26]

Assumption 5: The government will continue the process of change and the pattern of resource allocation obtained under ESS in the absence of external financing and conditionality.

[25] Even so, these funds can represent an important policy "leverage" as illustrated in later sections of this paper.

[26] Miscommunication between USAID and the Namibian government over the intent of program conditionality resulted in the government expending huge efforts to meet overly legalistic interpretations of the agreement.

The issue of sustainability boils down to this assumption; its validity depends to a great degree on whether or not Assumptions 1 through 4 hold. If the government truly desires change, if its objectives are well defined and it has identified the policy options it wishes to pursue, if the education sector institutions has or can develop the capacity to implement those options, and if macro-economic and political conditions remain favorable, then the odds of sustainability are greatly increased. When these conditions do not hold, the system reforms are probably not sustainable.

2.2.3 Assumptions Related to Institutional Development

Assumption 6: Institutional capacity can be developed simultaneously with implementation of a reform program.

The emphasis of the ESS approach on policy reform and resource allocation implies that developing institutional capacity is less an issue than getting the right policy or budget. While some ESS programs do provide for institutional development through technical assistance or training, it is generally assumed that the demand of managing the additional resources provided by the increased budget or the policy changes required by conditionality can take place simultaneously with attempts to develop administrative, managerial, and technical capacities. ESS programs assume that the lack of certain capacities does not jeopardize the ability of the sector to responsibly manage the reform.[27]

The key consideration is the match between institutional capacity and the management requirements of an ESS program. Frequently, program objectives exceed management capacity, leading to inefficiency and frustration.[28] A clear manifestation of systemic reform is increasing ministry capacity to translate broad policy intents and resources into strategies, plans, programs, budgets, procurement and distribution, accounting, supervision, and systems for monitoring, assessments, and evaluation. Yet these are precisely the functions that the reform seeks to bring about.

One strategy is to allow time for staff development and learning in the implementation of reform policies and to implement reform incrementally, rather than to assume that the organization is capable of implementing a full reform program on a national scale.[29]

[27] This is most evident in the area of budget and financial management. In Benin, for example, additional non-salary resources were introduced to the education sector at the same time that attempts were made to develop procedures and practices for accountability virtually from scratch.

[28] See Dennis Rondinelli, et al., 1990. *Planning Education Reforms in Developing Countries: The Contingency Approach*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[29] Peter Senge in his seminal work, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, (1990, New York: Doubleday) analyzes characteristics of "learning organizations" that successfully undergo self-transformation to pursue their policy objectives.

2.2.4 Assumptions about Donor Coordination

Assumption 7: Major donors share a vision of the educational reform, interpret program strategies and conditionality consistently, and use the same language to articulate expectations.

The efforts of other donors and the nature of their assistance play an important role in determining the success of USAID=s ESS programs. There is substantial evidence that donor cooperation can promote successful reform. For example, the success of joint USAID ESS and World Bank Education Sector Adjustment Credit efforts in Guinea and Lesotho illustrate how, with coordinated implementation of policy dialogue and conditionality, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The two agencies developed mutually reinforcing conditionality, and worked together to maintain policy dialogue with the government and to conduct performance reviews.[30] Coordination with the World Bank in Swaziland led to the development of an interactive computer model designed to inform policy dialogue with the results of data-based "what-if" scenarios.

Similarly, government reform programs are greatly helped by complementary donor modalities. This has been the case with USAID and the World Bank in Uganda and Ghana, and with USAID, the World Bank and the French in Guinea. In these cases, donors did not use identical support modalities, but coordinated their financing, technical assistance, and policy input to fit into government strategies and to support or complement each other.

Conversely, disagreement among donors and divergent approaches can dilute educational reform. This has been the case in Mali, where the World Bank and USAID have disagreed on the government's compliance with conditionality. In Benin, delays by the World Bank and other donors in defining support programs have left USAID stretched beyond its means in technical assistance and beyond its mandate, which is limited to primary education. In Guinea, the redeployment of teachers from secondary to primary schools required by World Bank and USAID conditionality was compromised by a French training project which certified primary instructors to teach at the secondary level.

As is the case among different donors, within USAID there must also be consistent interpretation of strategy and expectations. As many different actors within USAID are called on to contribute to the development and implementation of a given program, the Agency must devote effort to ensuring common understanding among Missions and Washington, as well as legal, contracts, technical, and managerial personnel.

2.2.5 Assumptions about the Process of Educational Reform

Assumption 8: The nature, sequence, and timing of policy, institutional, and people-level changes cannot be defined at the design stage.

Significant reform of social services is not a routine activity in any country, and African states are no exception. Educational reform may follow a variety of paths, and there is not always a logical progression from one phase to the next. Though reform is usually seen as led by the center or the top, it may start with a small cluster of schools at a program or regional level, and then be generalized to become system policy. In some cases bottom-initiated changes have led to sustained, systemic reform.[31]

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[30] As with many issues, donor coordination is complex. Thus, there was substantial donor coordination on some issues and activities, but little on others.

[31] For example, there is the case of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) rural primary school program described in Ahmed Manzoor, et al., 1993. (*Primary Education for All: Learning from the BRAC Experience. A Case Study*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, ABEL Project). Another important innovation is represented by

Even so, some reforms necessarily precede others. For children to master the objectives of a national curriculum, for example, there must be classrooms, trained teachers, a curriculum, and textbooks. Yet policy reform and institutional change may be necessary before an education system is ready to provide such resources. The phases implied by ESS approach involve change on at least four levels. Essentially, the government needs to:

- conduct policy dialogue to engage key stakeholders, carry out sector assessment and targeted research, negotiate policies and strategies, and articulate and "market" the policy reform;
- build the planning, financing, and organizing capacity to implement reform policies;
- develop institutions and programs, often concurrently with capacity-building; and
- reform schools, which are ultimately the most important component of educational reform.

It is likely to be impossible at the design stage to predict when certain reforms will be sufficiently well in place to permit the implementation of subsequent reforms. Unanticipated challenges requiring the attention of education leaders may arise during implementation. Overly rigid blueprints for the process of educational reform are likely to prove constrictive and counterproductive to the reform process. The need is for ways to maintain commitment to the reform process by both governments and donors. It is important to recognize that predefined requirements can maintain commitment to the reform process in one context, yet work against it in another.

Assumption 9: Measurable student-level changes will occur during program life.

Most fundamentally, the ESS approach to educational reform assumes that increased resources and policy changes in basic education, coupled with improved capacity of education sector institutions, will lead to sustainable increases in educational access and quality. While it appears reasonable to assume that improving the management and operations of educational institutions will lead to more efficient use of resources, it is difficult to predict the impact of such improvements at classroom and student levels. Education systems are generally understood to be "loosely coupled"; that is, they do not respond to inputs in predictable ways.[32] Centralized attempts to reform systems simply by providing more material inputs and training are unlikely to succeed unless ministries recognize that schools and classrooms are largely self-contained, autonomous social systems.[33]

One useful conception of the role of policy and central planning is that of creating the conditions, setting the standards,

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the Escuela Nueva in Colombia (see E. Schiefelbein, 1991. *In Search of the School of the XXI Century: Is the Columbian Escuela Nueva the Right Pathfinder?* Santiago, Chile: UNESCO and UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean). In Guatemala, USAID is supporting a program modeled in part on the Escuela Nueva approach.

[32] Weick (1976) ("Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21) first described educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. More recently, Monk (1992) provided a thorough review of the failure to arrive at a general production function for education systems ("Education Productivity Research: An Update and Assessment of Its Role in Education Finance Reform" in *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. (American Education Research Association) 14:4).

[33] See Ward Heneveld, 1994. *Planning and Monitoring the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (AFTHR Technical Note No. 14). Washington, DC: World Bank; Jacques Hallak, 1992. *Managing Schools for Educational Quality and Equity: Finding the Proper Mix to Make it Work*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP; R.G. Havelock, 1973. *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Education Technology Publications; Michael A. Huberman and Matthew B. Miles, 1984. *Innovation Up Close: How School Improvement Works*. New York: Plenum Press.

and providing the resources for school-level reform. Within those conditions, responsibility and incentives can be used to encourage quality school leadership and quality teaching.[34]

In this connection, the responsibility for designing and implementing program interventions can be placed at central, regional, district, or school-community levels. The location of powers and responsibilities over resources and personnel is a key policy issue, which should be related to the capacity of actors at national, regional, district, and school levels. Decentralization, a common feature of a number of the USAID supported educational reform programs, may not improve educational services if those at the lower level lack the capacity, guidance, resources, and incentives to stimulate reform in the classroom.[35]

The essentials needed at the school and classroom level to promote quality learning are extensively documented. They include school management, appropriate curriculum, learning materials, quality teaching, instructional time, and learning readiness of students.[36] Less clear is the connection between institutional reforms and their impact at the school and student level. However, the literature and the evidence from ESS programs in Africa suggest that school or student-level impacts do not become evident in the early stages of reform. The impacts of institutional reforms take time to become visible. Then, explicit strategies must be developed to reach schoolsCto manage and support school quality, improve learning, and to reach out-of-school children. These reforms require additional time for impacts to be seen at the student levelChigher numbers and proportions of children entering school, completing the basic cycle on time, and gaining the competencies and knowledge deemed important.

Yet it is only with changes at the school level that children will benefit from financial policies and institutional improvements in planning, programs, resources, delivery, and training. These resultsCgiven a realistic time frame for policy dialogue and the institutional and school level changesCare long-term, up to 10 years if the reform goes smoothly. If the strategy includes reform at selected schools simultaneously with policy dialogue and institutional reform, there can be a reduction in the time needed for changes to be observed. This assumptionCthat the policy and institutional changes that characterize USAID=s ESS approach will result in predictable and measurable improvements in a significant proportion of children=s learning achievementCis sound in the long term, but such improvements are not likely to be observed and measured during the life of a single USAID education program.[37]

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[34] Douglas M. Windham, 1982. "The Dilemma of Educational Planning" in L. Anderson L. and D.M. Windham, (Eds.), *Education and Development*. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Co.

[35] See James Williams, 1993. "Reform in Educational Decision-Making," *The Forum for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy* 2:2. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development, Project ABEL); and Donald Winkler, 1993. *Decentralization in Education: An Economic Perspective*. Washington, DC: World Bank, Education and Social Policy Department.

[36] For an excellent review of the USA literature, see the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990 (*Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis 1990 Update*. Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory). For a comprehensive review of international research on school improvement, see Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) (*Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press). Carron and Cau recently carried out a study of 200 schools in the developing world (1993, *The Quality of Primary Schools in Different Development Contexts*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP) provides good insights and principles. Levinger presents an excellent case for attention to children=s learning readiness as a key strategy for improving quality (1993, *Achieving Education for All: Nutrition, Health and School Performance*. New York: PACT Publishers).

[37] The case of Ghana illustrates the problem. The PREP program has operated since 1991, and has just obtained the results from a criterion-referenced test given to a 5 percent sample of children in the system. The design of the project made the claim the 80 percent of the pupils would achieve competency on 6th grade instructional objectives by 1995. The results form 1992/93 show that less than 5 percent of 6th grade pupils acquire that level of skill (as defined by Ghanaian educators). These results require that there be a major reassessment of both the instructional objectives and, of course, the quality of teaching and learning.

2.3 Conclusion: Early Lessons Learned

Our experience with basic education in Africa has demonstrated that it is possible to leverage important policy and institutional changes through ESS.[38] The level of success depends in large part on the degree to which these assumptions are recognized and accounted for in the design and implementation of ESS programs, as well as in the relationships between USAID and the host government, and USAID and other donors. Whether and how changes at policy and institutional levels are translated into the desired student outcomes can only be answered in the longer term. Some of the early lessons we have learned include:

! The political and economic context, in terms of the overall climate and the dynamics of competing interests in the education sector, plays a large role in determining what an educational reform can be expected to achieve.

In the cases of Ghana and Guinea, the program of stabilization and structural adjustment negotiated between government, the IMF, and the World Bank have provided the economic context for rehabilitation and reform of the education sector. In both cases, significant education sector reform is supported by macro-economic strategy. This is particularly so in Ghana, where the World Bank and the government have developed a strategy for accelerated economic growth that emphasizes expanding human resource capacity from the bottom up. In both cases, USAID has been able to leverage specific subsectoral policy changes through ESS, within the larger context of political, economic, and human resource policy reform. On the other hand, in Mali the political situation is chaotic. There have been at least five ministers of education since 1988 systemic policy reform at the government level has not been possible, and budgetary support funds have not been disbursed until recently.

! ESS works where government commitment to reform is strong and sectoral strategy is well-defined, because key policy and institutional changes have already been identified. Where commitment is weak and a sectoral strategy has not been developed by the government, ESS has not worked as well, and USAID has focused on projectized activity in the education sector.

Guinea=s educational reform is a case where USAID, in cooperation with the World Bank and the French government, supported strong government leadership and commitment.

Lesotho presents an interesting case where a newly elected government was not committed to a policy reform condition accepted by the previous (military) government. Government policies, embodied in its Five Year Plan for Education, were incorporated as conditions for the release of NPA tranches. All of the conditions were satisfied at the first tranche. However, with an election that brought the opposition to power, a key policy condition that had been negotiated with the previous government during program design presented the new government with a serious problem. The condition was that teachers would be hired directly by a unified teaching service (which as an institution was in place), rather than directly by the churches that owned the schools. The new government did not want to begin immediate negotiations with churches over this sensitive matter, and was unable to meet the deadline for the release of the second tranche. Education activities in Lesotho will thus continue only in projectized formCprovision of technical assistance to build institutional capacityCuntil the new government decides to implement the teacher appointment policy.

! Reform priorities and strategy must be related to institutional capacity. Budget allocations generally reflect government priorities; however, unless the institutions responsible for planning, programing, and managing expenditures can perform these functions, actual use of budget allocations will not correspond to reform policy priorities. In this regard, an adequate time frame is essential if institutional capacity is to develop.

[38] This "evidence" is presented throughout this report, especially in Chapters 3-5.

The case of Benin illustrates the problem of implementing major budgetary reforms and providing increased funds to primary education without the institutional capacity in place to direct and manage reform. The first two years were frustrated by expenditures that were not clearly related to the strategic priorities of the basic educational reform.[39]

Malawi presents an interesting case in which institutional capacity is being developed simultaneously with increases in budgetary provision to basic education. Through use of short-term technical assistance and local capacity, including non-governmental institutions, new functions related to book distribution, curriculum revision, and gender awareness training are being developed.

! Improving the institutional capacity of the education bureaucracy at central and regional levels is not an end in itself. Increased capacity for planning, budgeting, curriculum design, procurement, distribution, etc. is necessary, but clearly not sufficient for educational reform. The reform and its corresponding capacity building must explicitly focus on the school and must address student learning directly.

Ghana, which in some ways is exemplar of USAID=s ESS approach in achieving all conditions, has seen significant sustained budgetary allocations to primary education. Yet its recent mid-term evaluation and external assessments have found that the considerable inputs provided through the distribution of texts and instructional materials and large-scale in-service training have not yet had an obvious impact on the quality of classroom instruction and learning. This is a case where inputs have been put in place and physical infrastructure reconstructed with little change in the quality and process of instruction. These issues are now being addressed by the government, USAID, and other donors, with the focus of the reform now turning to improving quality at the school level.

! Conditioned budgetary support has leveraged significant changes in resource distribution and basic education policy within education sectors,[40] but whether the new levels of financing and policy changes are sustainable without outside assistance and/or pressure remains an open question.

! Donor collaboration in support of the reform process is an effective, and perhaps essential strategy.

Donor collaboration is most evident in Uganda, Guinea, Lesotho, and Ghana. USAID=s independent efforts to use budgetary support and conditionality to leverage policy change are problematic where there is little donor collaboration, particularly in terms of sectoral adjustment. This observation raises the issue of whether USAID can, or should, attempt to implement ESS if other donors, especially the World Bank, are not involved at the policy level. Indications are that the effectiveness of USAID=s programs is greatly compromised under these circumstances. First, USAID=s interest and mandate is limited to basic education, while sectoral reforms encompass all levels of education. This is a critical issue in terms of intrasectoral reallocation of resources. Furthermore, if a government is assured of projectized assistance from other donors sufficient to make a show of activity in the sectorCschools being built, training programs implemented, cars and equipment purchasedCthen the willingness to make the hard choices inherent in policy reform and compliance with conditionality is subverted. This contrasts with the leverage two or more donors can exert when they co-implement

[39] This problem was not unexpected, as the program was designed quickly, and results were not expected in two years.

[40] Joseph DeStefano and Karen Tietjen, 1993. *Budgetary Impact of Non-Project Assistance in the Education Sector: A Review of Four Countries*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development.

policy-based programs of assistance based on genuine, nationally- directed reforms.

And so we return to the question that began this discussion, whether the ESS approach is sound, based on what we know about educational reform. The answer must be a conditional yes. Under the assumptions discussed above, ESS can provide an important means for donors to assist educational reform.

From the conceptual view of the ESS approach in Chapters 1 and 2, Chapter 3 turns to USAID=s experience in implementing ESS. Chapter 3 focuses on how USAID has applied the ESS approach by looking at how the Agency holds itself accountable for performance.

Conclusion to Part I

In principle, USAID=s ESS approach is a sound way to support policy reform when the conditions that have been described in these chapters are satisfied. Although it is too early to make an informed judgment on how much USAID=s programs will contribute to the quality of learning for African children, there are compelling indications that the ESS approach is producing results:

- In general, USAID=s ESS programs supporting policy reform are linked to a framework of government macro-economic policies and constraints.

- Donors, and USAID in particular, are actively involved in sector policy discussions with governments.

- ESS programs provide technical assistance to strengthen those ministry institutions which are essential to a national program of education reform.

- ESS programs are focused on the ultimate objectives of improving student attainment and achievement, taking into consideration the system of policies, institutions, and processes affecting the delivery of basic education.

In Part II we examine the operational experience USAID has had since 1988 in designing, managing, and evaluating programs to support basic education reform in Africa. The section poses, and seeks to answer, the question, *If the program approach is sound, how has USAID applied the model?* Implicit in the question and discussion are questions of effectiveness: How well has the Agency used ESS? How might it apply the approach more effectively?

Part II. How Has USAID Applied the Education Sector Support Approach?

Chapter 3. Impacts: Expectations and Reality

USAID=s education specialists are regularly asked to provide evidence that USAID has improved education in Africa. But what does "improving education" mean, and what constitutes compelling proof? This chapter compares the impacts USAID expects and plans for in its Education Sector Support (ESS) programs in Africa with those actually achieved. Discussion proceeds by placing the emphasis on impacts and their measurement within an historical context, reviewing the expected impacts and measures of educational reform prevailing in USAID, developing a grounded definition of "impact" from the programs themselves, comparing these impacts with Agency expectations, and exploring the reasons for any divergence. Our analysis finds that ESS programs have had noticeable system-level effects, which presage student-level improvements. The Agency is beginning to incorporate these system-level effects into its thinking and reporting systems. Unfortunately, the emphasis on student outcomes has often diverted the focus from the substantial system-level outcomes.

3.1 The Emphasis on Impacts

"Getting results" has always been the ultimate focus of USAID=s design, management, and evaluation activities. The logical framework (logframe), which distinguishes between higher and lower order objectives and impacts, was developed to assist project designers to express their intent in coherent and measurable/observable terms, and to track and assess project accomplishments. However, the impetus for measurement and the pressure to demonstrate results has increased in recent years, for multiple and related reasons.

As noted earlier, increased Congressional interest in U.S. development assistance to Africa has been concretized though the Development Fund for Africa (DFA) and the Congressional earmark for education. The DFA, because it closely prescribes management principles to guide USAID activities, creates by itself a need for careful monitoring and reporting to prove responsiveness to Congress. More significantly, however, the DFA=s call for sustainability, or "lasting change," and people-level impacts requires USAID to prove that its programs are achieving their goals.

This orientation toward results and accountability is further accentuated by the education earmark, which mandates the amount spent on education. Implicit in both earmarks is the assumption that not only have previous efforts to support African development been less than fully effective, but that insufficient resources and attention have been allocated to education. As noted in the 1989 DFA Action Plan, "USAID [could] no longer conduct business as usual in Africa." The current generation of USAID activities in Africa is seen as a "fresh start," a new page in Agency assistance to AfricaCone that must produce tangible and large-scale results in improving the lives of the continent=s citizens.

USAID has responded by recasting much of its assistance in Africa into programs aimed at systemic sectoral change, rather than the traditional, more narrowly-focused projects aimed at an aspect of a part of a sector.[1] "Investing in people" has become the watchword of USAID=s programs, and societal "transformation" is the ultimate standard by which its success will be judged. Both because of intensified external oversight and limited experience with overall program country orientation, USAID has developed new tracking systems and indicators to monitor progress in meeting performance targets and to capture the effects of USAID=s programs at the beneficiary or "people"-level.[41] In the Africa

[41] The need for these has been recently underscored by skepticism toward the NPA approach expressed in the 1993 House Appropriation Committee=s report, which states that "the benefits of such assistance have not been *conclusively demonstrated* to the satisfaction of the Committee."

Bureau, a performance contract paradigmC"performance-based programing"Cis used to develop the country programs. Missions are then held accountable for the promised results.

Performance accountability is also a defining feature of NPA. Budgetary support is conditioned on governments' undertaking specific policy-level actions and/or achieving certain outcomes, such as reallocating resources or increasing girls' enrollment. Government proof-of-performance is submitted at periodic tranche reviews. In addition, all ESS programs institute monitoring and evaluation plans, many of which specifically include assessment of NPA as one task.

Monitoring and evaluation take on added significance with the introduction of ESS programing. It would be difficult to argue that the magnitude of risk has not intensified, as the dollar amounts allocated to sectoral programs far surpass those previously invested in projects or even entire country programs. For example, in 1980, approximately $30.3 million were allocated to education and human resource development activities in Africa, compared with the $83 million allocated to basic education alone in 1994.

3.2Agency Expectation of Education Impacts

As noted earlier, widespread alarm about Africa=s education crisis in the late 1980s led to consensus among donors and African countries that fundamental changes had to take place in African education systems.[42] This alarm coincided with the advent of an extensive literature on education indicatorsCwhat they are and how to measure them.[43] Both the status of national education systems and educational objectives were stated in terms of quantifiable student outcomes: the percentage of school-aged children in school (access); the participation rates of girls and rural children (equity); completion, promotion, and transition rates (quality); and repetition and drop-out rates and cycle years (efficiency). Throughout the decade these measures of student performance became institutionalized in sector assessments, a burgeoning number of donor-sponsored statistical reports, and newly-instituted educational management information systems. Most significantly, these indicators were established as standard measures of the productivity and efficiency of education systems. They began to serve as criteria against which both educational reform and the impact of external assistance programs could be gauged.

These measures of education system effectiveness were broadly congruent with DFA guidance, which mandates that all USAID programs in Africa result in "people-level" impacts and contribute to improving the incomes of individual Africans in order to raise standards of living throughout the region. According to the Africa Bureau=s Non-Project Sector Assistance Guidance, "In all cases, DFA=s NPA programs should support sectoral development objectives, which must be defined in terms of their impact on poor people or households, e.g., increased income, production, employment...," and "in terms that are quantifiable and measurable." Education was seen as "an effective way to raise incomes and spread the benefits of modernization." While increased household welfare may be a long-term impact of schooling, improving African education systems has been identified as the immediate sphere of USAID=s ESS program influence. The 1989 DFA Action Plan lists the following key impacts or "benchmarks" of success for USAID=s education reform efforts supported primarily by NPA:

! The share of government budget going to primary education

[42] For a detailed description of the crisis and recommended policy options, see World Bank, 1988. *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion*. (World Bank Policy Study No. 9777). Washington, DC: World Bank.

[43] One of the best examples is Douglas M. Windham, 1990. *Indicators of Educational Effectiveness and Efficiency*. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, IEES Project.

- Enrollment levels
- Drop-out and repeater rates for primary and secondary schools
- Literacy rates

In addition, the DFA requires that all measurement data be disaggregated by gender in order to evaluate the extent to which equity goals are being met.

It is notable that three out of these four officially-sanctioned impact measures occur either at the student level or in the population as a whole. Although the DFA and the Action Plan accentuated the need for policy reform and sectoral restructuring, only one indicatorCresource allocationCmeasures policy reform.

This tendency to define change in education systems, as well as to assess the impact of ESS programs, at the student, or beneficiary, level is also evident in the Africa Bureau=s Assessment of Program Impact (API) framework. The API reports serve as the principal means of tracking country program impact and evaluating the effectiveness of its strategies, as well as providing the basis for the reports to the Bureau and Congress that are mandated by the DFA. The majority of API-established indicators are designed to measure change in student outcomes over the extended period of time a country strategy is in effect (see Table 3.1). For the 1993 review period, only in the areas of "quality" and "sustainability" are there measures of program impact that relate to changes in the education system itself, such as increased number of complete schools, or more favorable student-teacher ratios.[44] In addition, the Agency-wide program, Program Performance Information for Strategic Management (PRISM), charged with developing a standardized list of education indicators, has, initially at least, focused on student outcomes.

The result is that student outcome indicators have tended to be regarded within the Agency as the sole measures of impact. In general, the impacts expected from both USAID=s country programs and its ESS programs are defined and measured in terms of the final outcomes of an education systemCincreased enrollment, greater participation of females and marginalized populations, improved student achievement, and lower student repetition and drop-out.

[44] As discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, API indicators in 1994 have been expanded to include more indicators of education system change.

Table 3.1: Indicators from the Assessments of Program Impacts (APIs)[45]

Country	Access	Equity	Efficiency	Quality	Sustainability
Mali	! Increased no. of children enrolled in grades 1-6.	! Increased female GER. ! Increased no. of complete schools in Koulikoro region.	! Increased completion rates (to P6). ! Decreased repetition rates.	! Improved achievement in core areas of P2 and P5. ! Decreased student/teacher ratio. ! Increased no. of trained teachers & classrooms. ! Increased availability & utilization of texts by teachers and students.	! Increased school funding by school parent groups. ! Increased MOE share of central government budget and primary education share of MOE budget.
Ghana		! Increased % of eligible children attending school in: North, Upper East, and Upper West.		! Increased % of literate/ numer-ate children completing P6. ! Increased no. of teachers trained to minimum standards. ! Increased availability of texts & instructional materials. ! District ed. officers, circuit supervisors, circuit monitoring assistants hired and trained. ! CRTs developed and conducted.	! 38% of education budget going to basic education; 5% of basic education budget spent on instructional materials. ! Gap reduced 80% between budget and spending. ! Budget data disaggregated so that primary education is a separate category.
Guinea	! Increased GER.	! Increased GER for females, and in rural areas.	! Increased completion rates (P6). ! Decreased no. primary school repeaters.		! Increased govt. budget to ed,, ed. budget to primary, & primary ed. budget to non-salary operating expenses. ! Improved national procurement procedures and reporting system on local primary school expenditures.
Lesotho	! Increased GER.	! Increased % of primary school female enrollees completing Standard 7.	! Increased completion rates. ! Decreased cycle costs.	! Improved Standard 3 test scores. ! Increased no. trained teachers. ! Decreased pupil/teacher r& pupils/classroom ratios. ! Increased availability of instructional materials, teachers= guides, and seating.	! Restructured MOE, improved MOE financial management, and EMIS implemented. ! Increased MOE real recurrent budget and % of MOE budget allocated to primary ed. (70% target).
Malawi		! Increased GER & retention of female pupils.			
Benin	! Increased GER.	! Increased female GER. ! Equitable enrollment in FQL schools by region/gender.	! Decreased repetition and dropout rates. ! Increased rate of completion of cycle.	! Improved achievement throughout and at end of cycle.	
Namibia	! Increased GER.		! Increased completion rates. ! Decreased wastage and repetition rates.	! Improved achievement in core subjects. ! Increased pass rate on national examinations. ! Increased no. of schools providing minimum quality of education.	
Uganda		! Increased % of girls enrolled in P3, P5, and P7 as % of girls who start school.	! Decreased no. of years provided per graduate.	! Increased no. of students passing P1-6. ! Increased availability of books. ! Increased no. of teachers receiving non-credit in-service training and teachers holding Grade III or IV qualifications.	

3.3 Program Reality: Planned Impacts and Actual Impacts

In these ways, Agency expectations of impact for its education programs are clear. The DFA emphasizes improvement in student outcomes, the final "product" of a reformed and effective education system, as valid measures for evaluating the

[45] Note that Ethiopia is not included because these indicators are taken from the 1993 review period.

long-term impact of its programs and the success of its education sector strategies. But are these impacts and indicators congruent with those actually planned for, supported by, and measured in USAID=s ESS programs in Africa? What impacts can realistically be expected to occur within the five-year time frame of a typical ESS program? And, more significantly, what impacts have USAID=s ESS programs actually had?

3.3.1 Program Impacts as Planned

At a general level, the DFA emphasizes equity and efficiency in the provision of key public services such as education. USAID=s ESS programs identify five purposes[46] or potential areas for impact: to improve: access, equity, efficiency, quality, and sustainability of educational systems and services. The majority of ESS programs claim "quality" (nine programs), "efficiency" (eight), and "equity" (six) among their goals; "access" is a focus of three programs.

A more complex model of educational reform is revealed by analysis of the ESS programs= End of Program Status indicators (EOPS), as found in the ESS program logframes.[47] These indicators are the tangible measures of the expected program impact. (See Table 3.2) The picture that emerges is a hierarchy of impacts, both in terms of magnitude and of the level and "arena" of the education system where the impact takes place. Moreover, in sharp contrast to student outcomes identified by the DFA, the impacts targeted by actual ESS programs occur primarily within the education system itself.

Student-Level vs. System-Level Impacts

USAID=s ESS programs are characterized by two foci: systems and students.[48] "System-level" focus means that the education system itself Cits policies, institutions, organization, administrative structure, management, personnel and service Care the objects of improvement. Such programs expect to deliver change and reform at the system level. For example, the Ghana program states its focus clearly: "To strengthen the policy and institutional frameworks required to assure a quality, accessible, equitable, and financially sustainable primary education system."

"Student-level" focus, on the other hand, means that change is targeted and expected in terms of student outcomes. In these cases, while the program may support activities or require system-level improvements, it expects and holds itself accountable for producing results measured at the student level. A good example of student-level focus is the Malawi program's statement of purpose: to increase girls= attainment in basic education. It should be noted that the ESS programs substitute student-level impacts for people-level impacts, which the DFA and NPA guidance tend to associate more closely with household welfare. For example, while the DFA cites overall literacy as an indicator of an effective education system, the ESS programs focus on the immediate products or outcomes of the education system, such as increased student access, attainment, and/or achievement. Literacy and other measures of household welfare (e.g., increased employment, higher wages, and reduced fertility) are generally mentioned as higher order goals, beyond the manageable interest of the ESS programs.

Consequently, the impacts and measures identified by the education programs fall into two broad categories: those that occur at the "people" or *student level*, and those that indicate that the process of educational reform is taking place at the

[46] The program purpose, as defined by Agency guidance, expresses the expected impact of the program, the real or essential motivation for producing outputs and undertaking the support activity. In the hierarchy of objectives, the purpose is considered the highest level of impact (or change or reform) within the "manageable interests" of the program.

[47] EOPS refers to End of Project Status Indicators, the expected tangible results of an Agency project or program. For a complete listing of EOPS by country, see the Annexes.

[48] Program focus describes the orientation, target or focus of the education program=s effort, as defined by its purpose.

system level. ESS programs define people-level impacts exclusively in terms of products or outcomes of the education system, as indicated by measures of student access, attainment, and achievement. Additional cross-cutting measures at the student-level include indicators on special groups (e.g., girls) or reduced costs in terms of years or dollars per graduate. While the DFA cites literacy as an indicator of an effective educational system, the programs' definition of people-level impact does not include measures of external efficiency (e.g., increased employment, higher wages, or reduced fertility), although these may be cited as higher-order goals beyond the manageable interests of the ESS programs.

Table 3.2: Typology of Education Program Impacts and Measures[49]

		Access	Equity	Efficiency	Quality	Sustainability
PEOPLE	***Student-Level Impacts:***	! Increased enrollment ratio ! Increased 1st grade admis-sion rate	! Increased enrollment of girls and rural children ! Increased % girls in each grade ! Increased girls' persistence rates ! Increased participation of disadvantaged groups	! Reduced cycle years/pupil ! Reduced cycle cost/pupil ! Reduced repetition rate ! Reduced drop-out rate ! Increased % sitting for primary exam	! Increased % primary students demonstrating mastery at grade levels ! Improved test scores ! Increased % of student in FQL/BQS schools ! Increased % students with non-native language fluency	
PROCESS	***System-Level Impacts (Arenas):***					
	Policy	! Teachers redeployed to primary classrooms ! Private schools certified	! Equity policies promulgated ! Teacher: learner ratios equalized ! Fee waivers for girls instituted	! Reduced per pupil unit cost at higher levels ! MOE reorganized by decree	! Increased % schools with basic materials ! Targeted student: teacher ratio met	! Increased % of education budget for primary (without donor funding) ! Increased % of national budget for education ! Increased % for non-salary recurrent budget
	Institutional	! More teachers trained/ retrained	! Equity strategy developed ! Gender bias removed from curriculum ! Teachers trained in gender awareness	! Decentralized MOE functions ! Strengthened planning capacity ! Personnel tracking system in place ! Strengthened management capacity ! Strengthened school inspection ! Monitoring and evaluation system in place ! EMIS system in place ! Annual budgets developed ! Transparent accounting systems developed ! Timely salary payments ! Standard commodity package developed ! Improved MOE staff competencies	! Student assessment system in place ! Increased % of budget for teaching materials ! Improved curriculum in place ! Improved curriculum development process ! Better teacher training ! Improved textbook production/delivery system in place ! FQL/BQS standard established ! In-service teacher training in place	
	School	! More classrooms built ! Multigrade schooling introduced/ developed	! Equity program implemented	! Reduced teacher absences ! School supplies delivered on time	! Increased % schools with qualified teacher ! Increased % schools offering certain courses ! Increased % teacher classroom time on instruction	! Increased funds for school
	Community	! NGOs strengthened/ personnel trained		! Strengthened parent-teacher associations	! Quality changes discussed in public forum	! Community contributes to construction

[49] Specified target levels or country-specific information has been eliminated. Also included in the table are some output indicators, selected because they appear to herald real and significant change at the system level. Given the interaction and overlap among these different impacts and measures, their placement under the various purpose rubrics is flexible.

The Agency=s ESS programs also identify numerous intermediate, system-level impacts and measures that are intended to demonstrate that significant harbingers of meaningful change have occurred. In combination, such changes may lead to improved student outcomes. These impacts take place within the education system and include a variety of indicators, ranging from institutional reorganization to more books per student. With the exception of South Africa, where USAID works with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, these system-level impacts are limited to the public sector and rely on action and change in and by the education ministry.

Types of System-Level Impacts

A second important distinction is the *type* of system-level impact. Analysis of ESS programs suggest four "arenas" where impact may take placeCpolicy, institutional, school and community.

! *Policy arena impact* indicates that the government has promulgated, decreed, or declared, and implemented a specific course, practice, or standard of action that will guide its activities, programs, and interventions in the future. For example, a policy-type impact may be signalled by waiving tuition fees for girls as part of its equity objectives, as was done in Malawi. In Guinea, increased resources for education and their reallocation within the educational budget is considered a key indicator of policy reform.

! *Institutional arena impact* refers to changes or reforms in the apparatus of government, specifically the ministry of education and its organization, operations, and capacity. An institutional impact might be the restructuring of the ministry of education to favor primary education, as in Guinea; the regularized payroll and timely payment of teachers, as in Uganda; or the development of a standardized, criterion-referenced test (a diagnostic test of the education system), as in Ghana.

! *School arena impact* refers to changes which take place at or have immediate effect on the school. In Swaziland, increasing the amount of classroom time teachers spend on instruction is a desired result of Continuous Assessment. In Guinea, increasing the number of school places in rural areas is an anticipated result of the school construction program and teacher redeployment policy.

! *Community arena impact* alludes to system-level intervention or change that directly involves the community or village. Strengthening parent-teacher associations, as planned for in Benin, is a good example.

The numerous impacts anticipated by the education programs present a powerful contrast with the parsimony of those noted in the DFA documentation and guidance. It is clear from this typology of actual program impacts and associated measures that educational reform, as well as the impact of USAID=s activities, takes place at multiple levels in the education system.

In practice, USAID=s education programs treat educational reform holistically. Many impacts are linked and must occur simultaneously or in close sequence for systemic reform to take place. For example, in rural Mali where the demand for education is low, increases in enrollment are predicated on the improvement of facilities, increased involvement of parents in school management and financing, and the training of teachers in pedagogy. Policy changes, such as instituting fee waivers for girls, may prove ineffective in improving the status of girls without changes in other areasCsuch as the presence of teachers trained to deal with the special problems confronting girls (e.g., institutional change) and the availability of school places to accommodate them (e.g., school change). In short, a single

impactCwhether at policy, institution, school, or community levelCmay not be a sufficient sign of meaningful educational reform. The case of budgetary allocation provides a good example. In addition to the extent of increase in or reallocation of resources, the impact of these extra resources should be measured in terms of better-equipped classrooms, better-trained teachers, better data collection and reporting procedures, better management practices, etc.

As this discussion has shown, analysis of the impacts targeted by ESS programs suggests that program planners expect change to happen in stagesCfirst at the system level, and later at the student (or "people") level. In order to affect student-level outcomes, the structure and services of the system must be altered. While measures of student-level impact may be the best indicators of a reformed (i.e., effective, efficient, and equitable) education system, and may foretell eventual increases in national literacy levels, they are a *final* chapter in the saga of educational reform. Of course, measures of student-level impact should be monitored, particularly as part of the performance measurement of Mission country programs, which cover a period longer than typical ESS. But student-level measures do not capture the necessary changes and intermediate impacts that must take place in the system itself in order to improve student enrollment, persistence, and performance. It may be premature to use student-level impact criteria of the DFA and other performance measurement systems (API, PRISM) that have extended time horizons to measure the effectiveness of the ESS program. More seriously, to do so may fail to capture the considerable progress already made towards more "equitable and efficient provision of (education) services."

3.3.2 Actual Program Impacts

The staged, dual-tier, and multifaceted model of educational reform that this analysis found to be implicit in ESS program design is reflected in the program impacts produced to date. Of the 12 education programs, eight targeted only system-level improvements in their scope for impact.[1] This clearly indicates that at the design phase the majority of ESS programs expected to influence change only in education systems and not in student performance.[50]

Student-Level Impacts

As a result, given the system-level orientation of most ESS programs and the fact that none has reached its scheduled completion date, the number of "people-" or student-level impacts is low. Nonetheless, there is encouraging evidence that the ESS approach and the NPA modality are valid means of promoting student-level change. Student outcomes have shown notable improvement in Ghana, Guinea, and Malawi since ESS programs were initiated. In all of these countries, USAID=s ESS program, often with other donors and occasionally alone, has provided the necessary budgetary support, critical interaction and guidance, and key technical assistance required to produce substantial student-level gains. Specifically:

! In Guinea, access to primary education has increased by over 30 percent since the inception of the national reform program in 1990, progressing from a 28 percent gross enrollment ratio (GER) in 1989/90 to 37 percent GER in 1992/93. The greatest enrollment growth has been for rural children and girls. Rural enrollments have increased 14 to 23 percent compared with 2.6 percent in the urban capital. Girls= GER has increased from 19 to 23 percent since 1990. In addition, the sixth grade

[50] Of the two education programs that do target student-level impactsCUganda and SwazilandCthere may be special circumstances involved. The Uganda program has a longer time frame than most ESS programs (10 years), which arguably leaves enough time for impact at the student level. Swaziland is a case where USAID has a long history of assistance, and student-level impact should be appreciable.

promotion rate has increased from 55 to 64 percent, while the drop-out rate has decreased from 15 to 11 percent, and the repetition rate has dropped from 23 to 20 percent. In all cases, the improvements have been greater for girls than boys.

! In Ghana, the primary GER has increased from 70 percent in 1987 to 79 percent in 1991, growing 13 percent since the introduction of the national educational reform program in 1987.[1]

! In Malawi, following the initiation of a fee waiver program for non-repeating girls, introduction of a gender-sensitive curriculum, and other measures designed to improve the educational attainment of girls, the average participation rate of girls in the first four grades of primary school has increased from 47 percent in 1991/92 to 49 percent in 1992/93. The rate of girls entering first grade rose from 48 percent in 1991/92 to 51 percent in 1992/93, the first time it has surpassed that of boys.[51]

System-level Impacts

Evidence of impact grows more robust at the systems level. Most countries with ESS programs have shown impressive improvements delivering education services to their school-aged populations. Table 3.3 presents some examples that illustrate the range of system-level impacts USAID=s program have supported in the four arenas of policy, institution, school, and community reforms. This analysis of actual impacts associated with USAID=s ESS programs demonstrates that notable progress toward education reform has been made, but that at the early stages of reform, progress is more likely to manifest itself at system rather than at student levels.

Table 3.3: Actual Impacts of ESS Programs:
Examples of System-Level Impacts of ESS Programs

Policy Reform	! In Guinea, Benin and Malawi, government decisions to restructure in favor of primary education are indicated by dramatic shifts in resource allocations. In Guinea, education=s share of the government budget has increased from 14 to 25 percent, and the per-pupil share of material and non-salary operating expenditures has risen from US$0.20 to US$11. In Malawi, the proportion of the education budget devoted to primary education has increased from 43 to 57 percent. In Benin, primary education=s share of the budget grew from 48 to 57 percent, and the share of the education budget for non-salary expenditure rose from 2 to 5 percent. ! In Malawi and Benin, school fees for girls in primary school have been eliminated; and in Guinea, Namibia and Malawi punitive pregnancy policies expelling girls from school have been either eliminated or revised to allow reenrollment after the birth of the child. ! In Uganda the government has reformed its textbook procurement policy so that it is now based on free and fair competition among private publihsers. ! In Lesotho, Namibia, Ghana, and Guinea, the ministries of education have been reorganized to promote and support the needs of primary education, rationalize staffing norms, and delegate more responsibilities to local authorities.

[51] In addition to USAID=s ESS program, which included these measures aimed at increasing girls= attainment, the ministry independently introduced tuition waivers (tuition comprises the major part of school fees) for all pupils in Standards 1, 2, and 3 over a period of three years.

	! In Uganda, in response to what had been the almost complete erosion of the real value of teacher pay, teachers= terms and conditions of service have been improved through a more than five fold increase in primary teachers= salaries.
Institutional Reform	! In Mali, Benin, Lesotho, and Guinea, school mapping and management information systems have been established and are used to track school data. ! In Ghana, Botswana, and Swaziland, tests to assess student achievement have been developed as diagnostic tools to measure and improve student learning. ! In Namibia, Lesotho and Guinea, budgeting and accounting systems have been revised to include detailed categorization of expenditures, more transparent nomenclature, etc. In Uganda a separate budget line for instructional materials has been established.
School-Related Reform	! In Ghana, the number of untrained primary school teachers has been reduced from 50 percent in 1989 to 30 percent in 1993. ! In Malawi and Benin, revised textbooks, teacher guides, and syllabi have been published and distributed to primary schools. ! In Ghana, Mali, and Guinea, the student:textbook ratio has been improved.
Community-Related Reforms	! In Guinea, the ministry has successfully incorporated a community support component into its school construction program, in which communities contribute 15 percent of construction costs in cash or kind. ! In Benin, a study of parent-student associations has been undertaken as a precursor to developing a strategy to promote greater parental and community involvement in school management and support.

3.4 Potential for Failure: The Expectation-Reality Gap

The above comparison of expected, planned, and actual impacts of USAID efforts to support educational reform reveals a divergence between what the DFA and the Agency expect on the one hand and what ESS programs intend and are able to produce on the other. Although DFA and ESS programs share the goal of improving education service, the Agency=s indicators of impact are measured at the student level, in contrast to ESS programs, which tend to measure impact more often (but not exclusively) at the system level. Moreover, not only do ESS program designs define impact as system-level change, but the actual impact of ESS programs to date has been manifested primarily in system-level rather than student-level change. These impactsCfrom the perspectives of the current literature and thinking on educational reform and from education experts in AfricaCare not inconsiderable nor insignificant; they portend improvements at the student level. But there is a risk that these system-level impacts will fail to be appreciated and fairly evaluated outside the education community, because they do not accord with overly-ambitious expectations of student-level change within the standard time frame of an ESS program.

Why is there a divergence between Agency expectations and the planned and actual impacts of the USAID=s ESS program? There appear to be two overarching problems. First, the desired impacts reflect an earlier understanding of educational change that has since evolved. Second, USAID=s ESS programs themselves tend to send mixed and confusing signals about what they can and will produce.

3.4.1 The Phases of Educational Reform

Implicit in this dichotomy between student- and system-level impacts is the concept of the phasing or sequencing of educational reform activities. Changes must occur within the education system before their impact can be exhibited in student outcomes. This hierarchy of change, or pyramid of impacts, inherent in educational reform must be recognized. Just as anticipated improvements in student enrollments or performance are valued as significant precursors to literacy (which may in itself be a harbinger of economic growth), changes in the system of delivering education should be prized as meaningful forerunners of student-level gains. In short, student outcomes are unlikely to improve without prior improvements in the education system. Consequently, to ignore system-level changesCeither by barely acknowledging their existence in Agency tracking systems or by neglecting them entirely in assessment frameworksCis to overlook an essential phase of educational development and reform. Indeed, more and more system-level indicators are being included in the APIs at the target level.

While the important point has been made that several activities must be undertaken simultaneously for educational reform to take place, there is also an implied sequencing of events and resultant measurable effects on system-level impacts. Our earlier categorization of policy, institutional, school, and community arenas of effect suggests that system-level impacts can be organized into a loose hierarchy. For example, a change in education policy should logically precede activities to carry it out. It is significant that a country has decided to increase or reduce teacher qualifications, and this should be noted as an important impact. In follow-up, however, it is equally important to note whether the requisite training has been provided to the teachers to ease their adjustment and validate the new policy, so that improved instructional quality or efficiency goals can be realized down the line. A good example of this system-level phasing is in Malawi, where policy eliminated fees for non-repeating primary school girls, and a teacher training and awareness program about girls= special needs in the classroom as well as a social marketing campaign aimed at parents are being planned in order to ensure that the girls persist in school.

3.4.2 The Time Factor

The concept of phased reform suggests that numerous actions must take place over time in order to yield the people- or student-level impacts associated with a productive education system. Timing, consequently, becomes a critical factor in whether a program can produce the desired and/or expected results at the student level. Most of USAID=s ESS programs are in countries where the entire education system must be adjusted or rebuilt, not merely improved at the margin or perfected (as is arguably the case in Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland). ESS programs are often initiated in countries emerging from years of political repression and civil strife that inhibited educational development or reversed its growth. For example, in Benin, the USAID program was launched in conjunction with government efforts to rehabilitate a public education system that had virtually collapsed. In Ethiopia, the new transitional government is attempting to rebuild the nations= governance structure and public services after 20 years of repressive, socialist rule.

Creating operational services within the education ministry, formulating policy, and developing and executing the programs to carry it out can easily take longer than the five-year time frame USAID generally allows its education projects.[52] In addition, it may take even longer for these system and structural improvements to be felt at the school level and expressed in improved student outcomes, as shown in Figure 3.1.

[52] The five-year time frame can be further retarded in those cases where institutional development relies on external technical assistance. For many of the current USAID education programs, a year has elapsed between Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD) approval and fielding the first long-term technical assistant.

There are several reasons in support of using a longer time frame. First, methodologically, years are needed to show increments of change, for it is likely that there will be a "lumpiness" in student-level gains. In Guinea, three years of imperceptible change in girls= enrollment was followed by a year in which girl=s enrollment grew by four percentage points, despite the lack of specific action to promote girls= enrollment. In Malawi, the elimination of school fees resulted in an immediate increase in enrollments (though it is uncertain whether this will lead to increased persistence in school). Information lagsCthe time it takes students or their parents to learn about and take advantage of improved education servicesCcan contribute to the uneven growth in student outcomes, particularly in areas of low educational demand, such as Mali, Guinea, and Ethiopia. This unevenness also suggests that the unit of time used by the API reporting system to monitor impactCone year for most country programsCmay be too fine an increment in which to detect change and to use to chart a steady progression, although the seven to 10 year time frame generally allowed country programs appears more reasonable. Insofar as Agency performance measurement systems are used to gauge ESS program effectiveness on an annual basis, either the time unit should be lengthened or the expectations of change redefined. A second reason in support of using a

Figure 3.1

longer time frame is that quality improvements at the student level are particularly difficult to capture in a short time period. Often, a full cohort progression through the system—six to eight years—is needed to actually measure (rather than project) gains in terms of persistence, completion, and promotion.

Third, parental decisions to invest in education depend on many factors beyond the control of the education system. An obvious example is one of economic growth and well-being. In countries where employment opportunities are scarce and where poverty puts even modest expenditures on education beyond the reach of households, there will probably be little growth in enrollment.

The need for a generous time frame is appreciated in principle. As noted in more than one Africa Bureau document, "systems change requires a longer-term view and a willingness to accept medium-term impacts that are indirect and intermediate, rather than direct and household level."[53] In fact, however, external pressures to show results or a lack of appreciation of what a longer-term time frame really means forces programs into scrambling after people-level impacts prematurely and ignores the importance of intermediate impacts or process indicators. Early ESS programs were conceived as a single phase of three to five years. The Program Assistance Approval Document or PAAD (1990) for Guinea, the third ESS program to be developed, explicitly cites "imperceptible student-level impacts" at the end of three years as a critical issue affecting program success or, more appropriately, perceptions of program success:[54]

> The Mission realizes that both the Congressional earmark and Development Fund for Africa legislation seek quality improvements in basic literacy, numeracy and primary education.... It is precisely in these areas, however, that the least progress will be seen during the three years of USAID assistance to Guinea. The [Education Sector Reform Program] is directed towards these ends, but the magnitude and complexity of the anticipated reforms along with need for associated social and economic changes mean that in the short run donor assistance will serve mainly to establish a framework within which expanded enrollments among boys and girls and improved efficiency and quality in primary education will be possible.

Nonetheless, six out of the seven End of Project Status indicators (EOPS) for this 3-5 year program are student outcome measures.

More recently, there appears to be a greater appreciation of the need for a longer assistance time frame. The design of several later-developed ESS programs refers to several program phases. The second most recent ESS program, Uganda, enjoys a 10-year time horizon—a result of long efforts by program designers to convince the Mission that a strategic intervention of more than two to three years, as originally envisaged, was required.

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53 USAID, 1992. *Fresh Start in Africa: A Report on the First Five Years of the Development Fund for Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Analysis Research and Technical Support.

54 Despite this cautionary note and the caveats included in USAID documents about longer timeframes, the recent mid-term evaluation based much of its assessment on the absence of student-level impacts, erroneously so, as Guinea has surprisingly produced some notable improvements in student-level indicators in a relatively short period of time.

3.4.3 Unclear Linkages and Imperfect Knowledge

Another reason for confusion about the results of an ESS program and even an educational reform effort is imperfect knowledge about educational change. An underlying assumption of the logical framework approach is that clear linkages exist between system-level reformsCin resource allocation, policies, and institutionsCand improved outcomes at the student-level, such as increased enrollment, persistence, and achievement. A second and associated assumption is that all the "ingredients" of a good education system and their relative effects are fully identified and understood. Much of the analytical work in international education in the 1980s attempted to "unbundle" the package of education inputs associated with positive student outcomes and assign relative weights and investment priorities, using a production function approach.[55] The reasoning behind ESS is that, given the primacy of the public sector in African education systems, central planning, policy, and resource improvements can create a favorable environment for lasting and sustainable school-level reform. While this is arguably true, there are some practical limitations inherent in this somewhat linear, "trickle-down" logic that could brake the rate of educational reform.[56]

As noted in Chapter 2, the "loosely-coupled" nature of education systems implies an absence of tight hierarchical linkages among its operating units, particularly between central administration and the school itself.[57] Especially in the developing country context, ministries of education often show a lack of communication, coordination, and supervision among departments, regional and field units, and schools. At the same time, however, rigid, culturally-defined roles of behaviorCparticularly teacher behavior in the classroomCare highly resistant to change.

The best efforts to reform of ministries of education often end with policy declarations and the formulation of a set of rules and regulations accompanying the policy. However, real changeCwhich results in improved student performance or system efficiencyCis stymied by inattention to implementation issues such as advising appropriate personnel of the policy or procedural change, and providing them with the proper incentives and guidance on what to do. The distance, literally and figuratively, between the administration and the school in developing countries is immense. The control exercised over regional and school personnel is weak. Policymakers rarely take into account that each school is largely a self-contained, autonomous social system that can be highly insulated from outside influence. Without special attention to the actual targets and beneficiaries of educational reform, policies to improve access, efficiency, and equity can be halted at the school door.

A second factor limiting the targeting of impact is incomplete understanding of school and classroom factors that positively affect student outcomes. Controversy surrounds the list of inputs needed to improve school quality. Debates concerning student achievement center on the relative effectiveness of textbooks and instructional materials, pre- vs. in-service teacher training, instructional supervision, etc. Nor are the strategies to put school improvement elements in place fully developed. For example, economic factors

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55 S.P. Heyneman and W.A. Loxley, 1983. "The Distribution of Primary School Quality within High and Low-Income Countries," in *Comparative Education Review* 27:2; Bruce Fuller and Aklilu Habte, 1992. *Adjusting Educational Policies: Conserving Resources While Raising School Quality*. Washington, DC: World Bank; Marlaine E. Lockheed and Adrianne Verspoor, 1991. *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press.

56 The following discussion derives, in part, from D. Chapman and L. Mahlck (eds.), 1992. *From Data to Action: Information Systems in Educational Planning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

57 K.E. Weick, 1976. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21.

are almost universally recognized as a barrier to girls= educational participation, but there is little guidance and even less experience in crafting a workable program to offset direct and opportunity costs of girls= schooling.

In a system that is "loosely coupled" and in which individual elements are resistant to change, good intentions can easily go awry, and sets of inputs can behave unpredictably because of the way changes are perceived and implemented. Yet as ministries of education and educators struggle to find the effective combinations of inputs, procedures, and strategies that can unlock the black box of the classroom, the time clock and inexorable pressure for national student-level impact push on.

3.4.4 Conflicting Guidance, Performance Pressures, and Reporting Distortions

Mixed Agency signals complicate the picture. While the DFA requires that the poor majority and vulnerable in society be the chief (and ultimate) beneficiaries of USAID=s programs, and specifies increased literacy and numeracy as the expected "people-level" impacts, the Africa Bureau=s Non-Project Sector Assistance Guidance recommends that its social sector programs, including education, support "increases in the provision of social services." The sequencing of these types of impacts has not been clear.

As applied to education, the NPA guidance argues for system-level impacts: more school places, more favorable student-teacher ratios or student-book ratios, etc. This system orientation is underscored by both the Agency's use of the ESS approach and its explication of DFA management principles themselves, in which sustainable change through systemic sectoral reform is a major precept.[58] Systemic change is defined as policy, institutional, and political reforms, most of which will be effected within the government itself. Both the short- and medium-term impacts will necessarily be expressed in terms of changes in governmental structures and services. In education, for example, a greater percentage of the education budget may be going to primary education or a change in the curriculum. According to this reasoning, the discernible impacts of USAID=s ESS programs during their initial phase should be represented as changes in education systems and structures, or process indicators, and not outcomes at the student level. This program orientation and its associated indicators of impact do not appear to accord with most of the interpretations of the impacts expected by the DFA, namely student-level outcomes, as they are currently being applied to the assessment of the ESS programs. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a certain dilemma is structured into USAID=s ESS programs in Africa. Specifically, there appears to be a gap between program goals and focus, on the one hand, and program measures of impact, on the other.

The majority of ESS program End of Project Status (EOPS) indicators do not measure the type or level of change they claim as their purpose. This results in a "disconnect" between what the programs are designed to do and how their success is gauged. Seventy-five percent of ESS programs focus on system-level reform, but 60 percent (35 of 58) of the EOPS measure student-level outcomes. (See Table 3.4) Consequently, there is a significant probability that several programsCand possibly the ESS modelCwill not be judged according to appropriate criteria or what was planned for in the design. For example, the programs in Benin, Botswana, Guinea, Lesotho, and Mali are all clearly system-focused, yet they assess their impact in the metric of student outcomes.[59] Only one education program, Ghana, has defined its

[58] USAID, 1993a. *AID=s Investment in Basic Education: A Description of Current Activities*. Washington, DC: USAID.

[59] Conversely, the Uganda program, whose purpose is described in unambiguous terms of enhanced learning, reduced inequities, and improved student persistence, chooses to measure its impact at the system-level.

EOPS impacts as system-level improvements resulting from supply-side interventions (e.g., more textbooks, more schools, and more teachers).

Table 3.4: Comparison of Program Purpose, Focus, and End of Project Status Indicators (EOPS)

Country	Purpose: to improve...					Focus (level)		EOPS Indicators		
	Access	Equity	Efficien-cy	Quality	Sustain-ability	System-Level	Student-Level	NUMBER	SYSTEM	STUDENT
Mali								3	2	1
Ghana			o			o		7	7	0
Guinea	o	o	o	o	o	o		7	1	6
Lesotho	o	o		o		o		6	5	1
Malawi			o	o		o		1	0	1
Benin		o					o	7	1	6
Namibia		o	o	o		o		4	3	1
Uganda	o		o	o	o	o		5	4	1
Ethiopia		o	o	o			o	5	1	4
Swaziland	o	o		o		o		7	3	4
South Africa			o	o	o	o	o	3	0	3
Botswana		o	o	o		o		3	3	0

What would account for these anomalies? Designers of the first ESS programs have pointed to the imperatives of the DFA-expected impacts as a primary factor in their use of student-level impact indicators for programs with short time frames. Often, it was hoped that the program would be extended into a second phase to offer a better chance of manifesting student-level change. The pressures of complying with all the dictates of the DFA and with Agency expectations may have caused program designers to sacrifice their knowledge of educational reform as a nuanced, phased, and lengthy process to the bureaucratic exigency of listing unrealistic, largely unattainable student-level outcomes as the impacts of a five-year program. While the program design and structure reflect the realities and requirements for support of educational reform, the dissimilarity between program purpose and focus, on one hand, and End of Project Status indicators, on the other, indicate something else was at work. The risk of inflating indicators of impact is that the design may be judged at fault rather than the indicators.

The ramifications of inflated or inappropriate performance indicators become particularly problematic within a context in which there is pressure to disburse funds, as USAID has faced in recent years in Africa. To acknowledge that some ESS program targets might not have been attained would compromise the fund flow. Consequently, there is a tendency to put a positive construction on fulfilling indicators in order to ensure continued disbursement.

The use and perception of the API process may contribute to the inflated claims of ESS program impact. API indicators are designed to monitor the impact of USAID country programs, primarily in terms of student-level outcomes, over a seven to 10-year period. During the 1994 API review, both Missions and the Africa Bureau in Washington suggested the inclusion of more process indicators for the various education subgoals and targets. Nonetheless, a comparison of past EOPS for the ESS programs and the API indicators for the education sector often shows considerable difference. In many cases, this divergence is characterized by "inflated" or higher-order of impacts for APIs. For example, Ghana=s logical framework indicates that an equity policy will be defined and implemented by its termination date. In contrast, the API for Ghana expects that gross enrollment in rural areas will increase. While the two are closely related, and certainly policy implementation is a prerequisite of a student-level outcome, there was a conflict between what program designers anticipated as a reasonable result within the time frame of the ESS program and what the Mission negotiated as a likely outcome. Although the API system measures country performance over a longer time period, to the extent that an ESS program=s viability and Mission accountability is judged by API indicators, there is the potential for underestimating the program=s performance, deeming it a failure and subjecting it to unnecessary redesign. API indicators are surely necessary for understanding the long-term impact of the entire country program, but they are not the best means of assessing an ESS program=s performance and providing needed information for managing-for-results. Use of the API system as an inappropriate substitute for ESS program assessment points to the need to develop and implement better ESS program monitoring and evaluation systems.

There is also indication of another problem, which may stem from the way API reviews are perceived as MissionCand even individualCreport cards, rather than a straightforward information system on country program status, as was originally intended. In some cases, it appears that Mission attempts to respond positively to the API indicators have led to distortion of data. In one instance, minimum student performance criteria appear to have been lowered beyond the point that was reasonable in order to demonstrate favorable progress toward overall literacy. The irony is that in such cases neither API tracking system nor Mission reports may adequately capture the extent and type of change associated with an ESS program. The combination of flawed application tracking systems and inappropriate or misleading reporting of data will probably make objective analysis and data-based decision-making efforts much more difficult.

3.5 Conclusion

Clearly, the differences between expectation of impact and actual results can lead to serious problems: distortions in design, misleading reporting of impacts, and failure to recognize and appreciate real impacts. The danger is that the new approach to systemic reform and the associated NPA modality be unfairly discredited because of an incomplete understanding of the process and dynamics of educational reform. In many of USAID=s African education programs, there is solid evidence that major reforms are taking place and that changes are being manifested in important ways, such as more favorable teacher-student ratios, student-textbook ratios, better trained teachers, etc. It is a short leap of logic to discern that, to the best of current knowledge, these system-level changes should be followed by student-level changes. However, in order to accurately gauge the success of USAID=s interventions in African education, Agency *principia medias* concerning educational change must be revised, and expectations of impacts must be congruent with the realities of the educational reform process. Interpretation of program impact andCultimatelyCthe favorable assessment of the Agency=s approach to supporting system-wide change in education rests on a shared understanding of what educational reform is, how it takes place and at what levels and in what sequence, and what a reasonable time frame is. As long as the Agency continues to look at only the student level for change, the less likely it is to understand and appreciate the positive educational changes its programs have helped bring about.

Chapter 4. Predesign, Design, and Management

The previous chapter examined USAID=s expectations vis a vis the impact of its Education Sector Support (ESS) programs in Africa. This and the following chapters look at actual Agency practices in design and implementation. USAID experience in implementing ESS programs is analyzed and lessons are extracted on how differences in the design and structure of ESS programs can lead to different accomplishments. The purpose of this exercise is to improve design and management so that the Agency can better promote educational development. Chapter 4 is organized according to the process of program implementation, from the decision to provide ESS, to the design of the program, to the management of implementation. Chapter 5 will look specifically at conditionality and how it can be used to promote sustainable reform.

4.1 The Decision to Provide Education Sector Support

One of the basic tenets of the ESS approach is that the decision to provide governments with ESS should not be automatic. Choices of when and where to mount an ESS program should be made with an awareness of the assumptions and conditions outlined in Chapter 2. Of the issues discussed in that chapter, government commitment and capacity are considered essential preconditions for launching an ESS program.

4.1.1 Is the Government Committed to Reform?

Though the existence of a national education reform effort is an *a priori* condition for embarking on an ESS program, there is great variation in governments= commitment to reform. In some instances, governments make pronouncements of their commitment to basic education (often in relation to "Education for All"), but these do not translate into cogent sectoral objectives and strategies. In other cases, donor activity in the education sector may create the impression that the government is committed to a reform program, when in reality external assistance is driving most efforts in the sector. In other circumstances, USAID may convince itself that a reform is underway in order to justify an already-taken decision to pursue an ESS program. Some examples help illustrate the role varying levels of government commitment plays in relation to USAID decisions to initiate ESS programs.

- In Ghana, USAID began providing support to the education sector in 1990, after the government had several years of experience implementing a reform program supported by the World Bank. The Ghanaian government saw human resource development as the cornerstone of its economic development strategy, and was committed to reforming and improving basic education. This experience and commitment greatly facilitated USAID=s decision to provide education support and has proven to be one of the important factors contributing to the success of that program.

- In Lesotho, the government's commitment to improving its basic education system was manifested in a sophisticated set of education sector development plans. USAID=s ESS program has supported these efforts, essentially by adopting the objectives and targets of the government=s five-year education development strategy. A first analysis of conditionality in the Lesotho program suggests great complexity and micro-management of the sector. However, aside from one condition regarding government-school proprietor relations, compliance has not diverted the government from its reform

objectives, and the reforms have proven easy for USAID to monitor.

! In Benin, on the other hand, USAID became involved at a much earlier point in the education reform process. The Beninese had established a national consensus around the priority of improving basic education, but the definition of sectoral strategies and plans was incomplete. As a result, USAID spent its first two years helping the government define its intentions in the primary subsector. This has been useful and important work, but it has meant that concrete results have been slow in coming.

Despite the recognition of the need for government commitment, other factors sometimes take precedence in initiating ESS programs. For example, commitment to reform can develop in response to sector support.

! In Malawi, USAID, under pressure to meet the congressional earmark for education, developed an ESS program supporting reform centered on equityCenhancing girls= attainment in primary education. However, government plans for the sector did not even mention the objectives of equity or girls= attainment. USAID saw female access to education, because of its correlation with reduced fertility, as supporting its larger strategic objective in Malawi of reducing population growth. Thus, an education program supporting an objective that did not exist in the government reform effort, was justified by USAID=s internal logic, despite the incongruence with the government=s initial intentions in the sector. Government commitment to the reform developed later, once the ESS program had been established.

! In other cases, such as Uganda, it was difficult for USAID to gauge the government's commitment to reform. Although at the time USAID decided to develop an ESS program, the government had instigated a reform, the impetus derived largely from a World Bank initiative in the form of preappraisal studies. This created the appearance of commitment, while the actual internalization of the reform objectives and strategies on the part of the government remained unknown. However, as the program was implemented, government commitment has been made increasingly apparent.

What factors intervene to lead the Agency to develop ESS in such divergent circumstances? Two are readily identifiable: the basic education earmark and political imperatives to provide assistance to certain countries. Not only did the congressional earmark for basic education set annual targets for USAID obligation of funds in this sector, it also explicitly stated that five new programs be developed between 1989 and 1991. This placed considerable pressure on USAID to initiate education programs (and to use NPA because of the amount of money expendable through this modality, as discussed in Chapter 1). In addition, the State Department used USAID funding to reward countries such as Benin and Namibia for making progress in democratic reforms.

4.1.2 Does the Government Have the Capacity to Carry Out its Reform?

Another tenet of the ESS approach is that governments must have the institutional capacity to implement the reforms USAID will support. As with government commitment, however, ESS programs have been launched in countries with varying levels of institutional capacity. Again, political and bureaucratic motives have sometimes held sway, and countries have been slated for ESS programs under less than ideal institutional circumstances. The implications affect not only the decision to proceed but also the structure of the programs.

Mali, Benin, and perhaps Guinea, are three countries where, at the time the decision was made to embark

on an ESS program, the institutional capacities of the governments were not sufficiently developed to manage substantial additional funds efficiently. Capacity was especially weak in the areas of budget preparation and expenditure monitoring. The decision to proceed was less a function of systematic needs assessment than of the political and administrative imperatives at the time of design.

4.1.3 How Much Budgetary Support Should Be Provided?

Once a country has been selected for an ESS program, decisions must be made about the amount of support to provide. The Agency has based such decisions on at least three considerations, two grounded in technical rationality, and one in bureaucratic logic.

- *National Financial Needs*. The NPA component of ESS is, by definition, a mechanism for supplying governments with foreign exchange. For this reason, the amount disbursed should be related to macroeconomic analysis of a country=s balance of payments situation.
- *Sectoral Finance Needs*. Because ESS programs often support budgetary changes in the education sector, specific analyses of education sector financial requirements and allocative targets are also required.

- *Pressures to Obligate Funds*. In practice, technical analyses are often sacrificed to an urgency to commit funds. Often a fixed dollar amount of support has already been targeted prior to financial analysis. The amount is based primarily on Washington=s calculation of how best to meet the basic education earmark.

It has proven extremely difficult to develop an analytical mechanism to equate the value of policy or institutional change with the dollar amount of support required to accomplish it. The aspects of reform that concern increased resource flows (typically for non-salary recurrent expenditures on primary education) are readily quantifiable. In these cases, the "costs of reform" can be calculated on the basis of the desired incremental difference in unit expenditure. The challenge is in quantifying the benefits of reform: what is the value of the increased learning assumed to be associated with expenditures on non-salary inputs?

Some ESS programs have attempted to quantify expected or assumed efficiency gains, by estimating the lower student-year costs required to produce a primary school completer, assuming a given reduction in repetition and dropout rates. The shortcomings of such a methodology are obvious since no empirical evidence exists to associate changes in inputs with gains in efficiency. Although rates of return to primary education are often used to justify investment in education, rarely has the Agency undertaken the research to calculate them.

4.2 Policy Dialogue

At the predesign stage, policy dialogue is a shorthand term for the complex process of discussion and negotiation among stakeholders within the country about policy and strategic decisions affecting the education sector.[60] It involves weighing different interests, objectives, costs, and benefits, and reaching a negotiated position regarding sectoral priorities. This process, in terms of its openness, the breadth of participation, and its grounding in realistic appraisal of sectoral constraints, is an important element in setting government reform objectives.

The governments of two countries, Benin and Namibia, piloted national dialogues about the goals and priorities of the education sector. In Benin, broad participation in the national conference led to a popular consensus on the priority of reforming basic education with an emphasis on improving quality and efficiency. *Les états généraux d=éducation* (an assessment of the status of the sector, aided by UNESCO) were produced in Benin as a direct result of the popular concern for the state of public education, and represented the first step towards defining a reform program. Similarly, in Namibia, transition to a post-apartheid democratically-elected government was accompanied by a national conference to determine priorities in education and a government strategy for redressing inherited inequities. The Etosha conference kicked off a national campaign of consensus-building and wide participation in the defining of a strategy for basic education reform.

Swaziland=s Ministry of Education, as a direct result of the MIS component of USAID=s project, held a National Education Symposium to initiate national dialogue about the education sector=s goals and priorities. The ministry has since promoted this approach as a model for other ministries in promoting national policy dialogue.

Despite its importance, however, USAID has sometimes failed to capitalize on the fruits of such a dialogue, for several reasons:

- *Lack of Knowledge*. Policy dialogue is a relatively new priority, and as a result, donors, including USAID, have relatively little experience in promoting it. Only in recent years has literature emerged on the role of donors in enhancing the policy dialogue process.[61]

- *Pressures to Move Forward Rather than Stay and Promote Dialogue*. Pressures within the Agency to deliver on promised funding for the emerging democracies of Benin and Namibia prevented devoting more time to continuing the policy dialogue. The most recent amendment to the Benin ESS program recalls the importance of the initial policy dialogue and cites the lack of continued government and public involvement in reform of the sector as a major constraint to program success.

- *Front-End Only Approach to Policy Dialogue*. The two cases of Benin and Namibia demonstrate a basic misunderstanding of policy dialogue. Too often it is seen as a discrete activityConce initial dialogue is completed, then government and donors can go about the business of education reform. In

[60] Operationally, stakeholders in the policy dialogue process have often been defined as Ministry officials. Awareness is growing of the need to carry out policy dialogue with a much broader cast of characters. See Chapter 7 for more discussion.

[61] See Luis Crouch, 1993. *Success in Policy Reform through Policy Dialogue*. (Staff Working Paper). Research Triangle, North Carolina: Research Triangle Institute.

fact, useful policy dialogue needs to be an ongoing process to ensure that stakeholders= concerns are accounted for in implementation decisions. In addition, as the impact of reform begins to be felt, priorities and needs may change or become more clearly identified and understood.

USAID is learning both the importance of policy dialogue and ways of fostering it and enhancing its quality, by structuring the process to permit wide participation of stakeholders, and by introducing analytic tools to facilitate the quantification of costs, benefits, and feasibility.

Policy dialogue has played the largest role in South Africa, where, for several years prior to the 1994 elections, a USAID-funded project facilitated discussions among a wide range of stakeholders on the possibilities and constraints facing development of a broader-based, more democratic education system after the transition to democratic governance.[62]

In Ethiopia, USAID is currently working to support development of a dialogue process as a precursor to defining the support role the Agency will play in the education sector. Specifically, USAID is helping the Ethiopian government develop a financial simulation tool so that the budgetary implications of different sectoral strategies can be considered when determining education priorities. In the process, the education ministry is being encouraged to open the dialogue to include representatives from other government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and communities.

4.3 Design Decisions

All ESS programs include the basic components of tranched budgetary support, performance criteria expressed as conditions precedent to disbursement of that support, and a package of technical assistance. However, as seen in Chapter 1, there are important variations in the way each of those elements is designedCthe mix of project and non-project assistance; the level of financing and the number of tranches; the intent, nature, and content of conditionalities; and the amount and focus of technical assistance. These differences have important implications for the implementation and outcomes of ESS programs in different national contexts. Box 4.1 summarizes a series of design principles suggested by our analysis of ESS programs.

4.3.1 Getting the Right Mix of Non-Project Assistance and Project Assistance

Non-project and project assistance are combined in ESS programs because systemic sectoral reform requires intervention at several levelsCpolicy, institutional, school, and community. According to the ESS conception of reform, policy changes without the institutional capacity to implement them is ineffective. Moreover, policy and institutional changes are seen as pointless educationally if they do not support improvements in the instructional environments of classrooms. Both top-down and bottom-up change is necessary. The concept of education reformCespecially in its policy and institutional reform elementsCcould be perceived as top-down. In fact, national attempts at system reform are often centrally driven, and, sadly, generally unsuccessful.[63] To address the loosely coupled nature of education systems,

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62 The activities described here were carried out by the Research Triangle Institute under the ABEL Project of the Global Bureau=s Human Capacity Development Center. Refer to F. Henry Healey, 1994. "Policy Support in South Africa: An Emerging Paradigm," *The FORUM for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy* 3(4) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development, Project ABEL).

63 There are examples of successful education reform in Africa, but they are largely limited to efforts to expand access

USAID=s approach has often incorporated simultaneous top-down and bottom-up components. The top-down elements include budgetary support and conditionality intended to leverage critical policy or institutional changes seen as critical to achieving sectoral objectives. Bottom-up components include the projectized aspects of USAID=s programs that address institutional capacity and specific technical areas affected by reform.

Yet while virtually all ESS programs include both project and non-project-assistance, there appears to be little cross cutting rationale for the differing combinations of non-project and project assistance in different countries. One reason is lack of knowledge. Little is known operationally about the optimal combinations of different modalities of assistance to achieve particular objectives in particular contexts. As a result, Missions have received no clear guidance on coordinating the use of project and non-project modalities. Other reasons relate to the size of NPA funding. In some cases, NPA appeared to be an expeditious way to obligate large sums of money. In other cases, the country situation was perceived as too risky to commit large sums of non-project funds. In this context, there are two issues worth exploring:

! How can project and non-project assistance be combined to support educational reform?
! To what extent does the split between NPA and PA affect the success of an ESS program?

One important use of project assistance is to provide technical assistance in conjunction with NPA to help overcome critical institutional weaknesses or to instigate changes at the school level. Long- and short-term technical assistance and training can be targeted to administrative or technical offices within the education sector to help develop capacity in areas key to success of the reform. Most frequently, this translates into technical support in financial management, education planning, the development of management information systems, teacher training, or curriculum development. Decisions on the amount and focus of technical support are made during the design process and depend on analyses of constraints and institutional capacity conducted at that time. These decisions take on added importance when the success of the ESS program is contingent on technical and institutional capacity that the ministry lacks.

(Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria). Most attempts at improving quality unfortunately have failed. In fact, the poor quality of basic schooling in Africa is in some ways attributable to the failings of past reform efforts.

Box 4.1: Principles in the Design of ESS Programs

Ask Whether the Government is Ready for ESS.	Critical questions need to be asked prior to actual design: Is the government committed to reform? Does the government have the capacity to carry out its reform?
Design the ESS Program to Fit the Local Context and to Promote Capacity-Building.	Design decisions should reflect specific country circumstances and the accumulated knowledge about what works best in ESSCgetting the right mix of NPA and PA & avoiding pitfalls of too much technical assistance and too little NPA; promoting transfer of skills by including capacity-building in the technical advisor=s scope of work; balancing long and short-term technical assistance; and choosing the technical assistance modality according to needs.
Identify Policy Objectives.	Program design should develop around a common (USAID and government) understanding of reform objectives. Systematic analysis of what is required to achieve these objectives in terms of policy, institutional reform, and operational issues should define potential areas for conditionality and program support.
Agency Learning.	ESS requires new thinking and ways of behavior on the part of all parties. On the part of USAID, there is a need for new management skills, greater involvement of senior Mission managers, and better communication within the Agency as a whole.

It is impossible to stipulate the ideal proportion of non-project and projectized components of an ESS program. The key is to ensure the complementarity of efforts.

Too Little Technical Assistance

A lack of appropriate technical assistance accompanying budgetary support can have a negative impact on program implementation. Three examples are Guinea, Benin, and Namibia.

! Benin=s ESS program has recently been amended to add projectized assistance in the key areas of financial management and pedagogy. The reasons: other donors have yet to deliver anticipated assistance, and the complexity and number of reforms being undertaken necessitates more technical assistance.

! Guinea=s ESS program has provided quite limited technical assistance in the face of an institutional analysis indicating serious problems in the ministry=s management capacity. Although some notable successes have been achieved, institutional changes in planning, budgeting, and expenditure control have been difficult to achieve. Evidence of backsliding suggests that newly-developed capacities are fragile at best. Guinea=s mid-term evaluation strongly recommended additional technical assistance.

! In Namibia, because USAID=s program was designed prior to the formalization of the government=s own education priorities, the tranche conditions of the USAID program were often not coordinated with with the ministry=s sequencing of reform activities. As a result, although the ministry had procured its own technical support through an institutional contract, this valuable part of the ministry=s staff was frequently pulled away from work on reform activities defined by the ministry to prepare documentation to meet USAID conditionality.

Too Little NPA

A second danger is so little NPA that USAID loses its budgetary lever over policy reform.

! In Mali, too much projectized assistance may have countervailed USAID attempts at policy dialogue. In

essence, the ministry has been able to forego meeting conditionality without losing the bulk of USAID=s assistance. One could argue that US$3 million was too weak an inducement to convince the government to make the hard policy choice of cutting subsidies to higher education in comparison to the US$17 million the ministry continued to receive in projectized funding, with little progress on the policy front. Although Mali=s ESS program has successfully promoted significant changes in teaching practices through targeted teacher training and support, these activities are not yet linked to changes in the policies or institutions governing in-service teacher training and pedagogical support. As a consequence, their sustainability is in question.

! In Swaziland, USAID has attempted to work at the policy level without the leverage of an NPA program. The Agency hoped to participate in the definition and articulation of policy by providing project assistance in support of key institutions in the sector. However, USAID has been unable to influence significant policy changes or engage in policy dialogue with the government. Whether this is because of the lack of program budgetary support is unclear

Too little projectized support has left USAID with no direct means to foster institutional developmentCa necessary condition for the translation of policy changes into programs of action. Too little NPA weakens the Agency=s ability to support difficult policy reforms. Such a situation may lead to projects with a broader scope than those of the past, but the question remains how sustainable such activities will be in the absence of policy change and resource reallocation.

An example of synergism across approaches is found in Malawi. Gender equity, though not a stated goal of the Malawian government, is strongly promoted by USAID=s ESS program. The program has pursued equity-enhancing policy changes such as the elimination of fees for non-repeating primary school girls. The program also includes an increased share of government resources going to the education sector and within that to primary education, as a means of making up the reduced revenue lost by eliminating fees. In addition, the program contains a projectized component which provides technical assistance and material support for developing a gender equity unit within the ministry=s curriculum development institution. In this manner, the issue of gender equityCspecifically in terms of eliminating gender bias from teaching materials and practicesCis given an institutional advocacy base. Another component of the project supports a social marketing effort aimed at working with communities to promote girls= education. This design permits USAID to support change at both the policy level, through the lever of NPA, and at institutional and grassroots levels, through well-targeted projectized activities.

4.3.2 Promoting Transfer of Skills through Project Assistance

Decades of foreign assistance to Africa has resulted in disappointingly little real transfer of skills and institutional development from donor-provided technical specialists and advisors. The following issues help determine whether knowledge transfer is successful.

Focus Identification of Needs

ESS program designers frequently define technical assistance too broadly to be operationally useful. Better would be specific analysis of institutional and technical constraints that would target the amount and type of technical assistance required to meet sector needs. Inherent is the need to prioritize technical areas according to how critical they are in implementing the reform realistically, so that government

activities do not expand beyond the limits of local capacity.[64]

Include Capacity-Building in the Technical Advisor=s Scope of Work

When technical advisors= scopes of work hold them responsible only for completion of specific technical tasks (e.g., development of computerized budget system), they are motivated to complete that task, not to train counterparts to complete it. If transfer of skills is what is desired, then the scope of work should hold the TA accountable for developing the skills of his/her counterpart or for the institutionalization of procedures and practices in the concerned office. Doing this, however, is likely to require more time by a factor of two or three, and provision must be made in the scopes of work, the minds of donors, and in their plans.

Balance Long- and Short-Term Technical Assistance

Recent studies suggest that African dependence on expatriate expertise has not diminished with long-term technical assistance.[65] One reason is that foreign advisors are reluctant to "work themselves out of a job." Similarly, secondary income opportunities frequently work as a disincentive for underpaid local counterparts. USAID=s ESS programs in Malawi, Ghana, and Benin rely on intermittent short-term advisors, who make repeated short-term interventions in support of a specific program objective such as developing planning capacity or reforming student assessment. This may prove an effective way to limit the expert=s role to one of advisor, and leave responsibility for completing technical tasks with the ministry.

Choose Best Technical Assistance Modality According to Needs

USAID uses a variety of mechanisms to provide technical assistance and trainingCpersonal services contracts (PSCs), institutional contracts, buy-ins to existing centrally-funded projects, and cooperative agreements with PVOs. Table 4.1 summarizes some of the pros and cons associated with each modality in terms of management burden, degree of competition in awarding of contracts, etc. Although no clear evidence exists to advocate one mechanism over another, certain mechanisms are more appropriate according to the constraints of different situations. Three critical parameters are the amount of time required to field a technical assistance team, the management intensity of the contract mechanism, and the quality of technical, institutional backstopping provided.

64 World Bank, 1993. *The World Bank=s Role in Human Resource Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Education, Training and Technical Assistance.* Washington, DC: World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department. See Chapter 4.

65 See, for example, Elliot Berg, 1993. *Rethinking Technical Assistance: Reforms for Capacity Building.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Table 4.1: Options for Technical Assistance

Modality	Pros	Cons
Institutional Contractor	Facilitates management (single contract)	Long process for RFP
Use of PSCs	Easy to field and low-cost (no RFP)	Management intensive (multiple contracts)
Buy-in	Easy to start up (no RFP)	Reduced control of contractor selection
Mission-based IQC	Responds to need and uses repeated short-term TA	Difficult to establish; most labor intensive (each request requires a contracting action)

4.3.3 Finance Mechanisms

In project assistance, funding is controlled and managed by USAID as part of project operations. Although interaction with the host government is encouraged, most project decisions and implementation activities can be taken independently of government input and financial support. The finance mechanism most often associated with projectsCinstitutional contracts[66]Callowed project funds to be easily tracked and accounted for, and to be easily linked to deliverables (outputs).

The advent of the ESS approach to education fundamentally changed the way program financing was handled. As noted, ESS=s NPA funds are disbursed to governments in tranches against mutually established conditions in order to leverage key policy, institutional, and budgetary reforms. These funds are not intended to be tied to specific sectoral activities, but are released as budgetary or balance-of-payment support. In principle, there is no expectation of a commensurate amount of funds going to the education sector, although the amounts of budgetary support are supposedly based on the shortfall between projected government education expenditures and the cost of educational reform.[67] If the government can meet the performance conditions with fewer resources than the USAID grant, then the surplusCin theoryCshould not pose a problem. Accountability is in performance (meeting conditionality, including targeted levels of allocation and\or expenditure), not in expenditure of U.S. dollars. When technical assistance is provided in association with an ESS program, it is done through a parallel projectized package and is aimed at strengthening institutional capacity to manage the reform.

The underlying rationale is that there will be a greater probability of sustainability with the "hands-off" NPA modality, because reforms are funded through the government budget[68] and because the government

[66] Although not discussed, host-country contracts were an alternativeCand reportedly less satisfactoryCmeans of project financing.

[67] The use of this method to determine USAID funding levels, while convenient, contributes to a basic misunderstanding of the NPA modality. To reiterate, funds are going for balance-of-payment support and, as such, do not "pay" for a specific reform.

[68] The idea is that if passed through the government budget, then increased funding levels for education are more likely to become reified, routine, and, consequently, sustained.

retains full responsibility to manage and implement its education sector reform. Government responsibility necessitates that USAID relinquish full control of its funds and that it essentially depend on the government for program implementation. Consequently, this leaves USAID and the program vulnerable to the consequences of non-performance.

Mechanisms for Budgetary Support

Within the NPA modality, USAID has adopted several mechanisms for the transfer of funds. These vary in congruency with the DFA philosophy of government control and relaxed tracking requirements, but, under certain circumstances they may offer distinct advantages. There are three primary mechanisms for providing balance-of-payment support to education programs:[69]

Cash Transfer is the principal mechanism for transferring funds in NPA programs. Cash transfer is consistent with the philosophy that external funds be internalized and subjected to the same treatment as all government funds. This increases the potential for sustainability because funds become part of the national budget and thus increase the government's capacity for rational planning and accountability. In addition, by "voluntarily" increasing allocations to the education sector, the government demonstrates its commitment to educational reform. As part of USAID=s ESS programs, funds ranging from US$3 million to US$85 million are transferred in multiple tranches to government treasuries for balance-of-payment support. Local currency is generated when USAID dollars are sold through the national auction system to buyers of foreign exchange. For this reason, USAID requires that access to foreign exchange meet predetermined standards of openness and competition. Tracking requirements are limited to documenting the sale at auction and transfer to the treasury. Thereafter, the funds enter the government system and budget, and can no longer be tracked, nor is there any requirement to do so.

A risk, however, is that if the government does not meet the performance conditions specified in the grant agreement, USAID will have incurred a significant loss of development funds. This possibility is mitigated by conditioning continued disbursement on performance. But in many ESS programs, the magnitude of a single tranche disbursement (on average, ranging between $5-10 million) exceeds the total amount often allocated to traditional projects. Thus, the size of potential loss can be substantial. Although criticism of cash transfer centers on doubt that the full amount of funds provided to the government will reach the education sector, it is important to note that the NPA guidance does not require or even expect a direct correspondence. The two necessary conditions are an acceptable foreign exchange auction, and confidence that government resource management practices are sufficiently sound to allow adequate funds to reach the education sector.

USAID=s education programs in Mali, Malawi, Benin, Namibia, and Uganda use cash transfer following successful tranche review. In almost all cases, this mechanism has proved programatically viable. The Government of Mali was unable to meet performance conditions, and tranches subsequent to the first were not released. The good news is that this process allowed subsequent negotiations between USAID

[69] Although it has not been used for the current group of education NPA programs, the Commodity Import Program (CIP) approach creates a special fund for financing commodity imports (foodstuffs, equipment, etc.) for resale to generate counterpart funds. Although these funds belong to the government, their specific use is negotiated with USAID. In Zimbabwe, an education program (BEST) used these funds to underwrite a series of grants and activities in the education sector. CIP-generated funds are subject to all counterpart tracking requirements, which means that their use must be documented and accounted for all the way to the ultimate beneficiary. This can carry a heavy management burden, as the USAID funds must be tracked in both directions: not only to the end-user as indicated, but also to the commodity purchases themselves, to ascertain that approved commodities were purchased (for example, equipment rather than weapons).

and the government to define more feasible policy reforms. Although unfortunate from a program perspective, the conditioned disbursement procedure saved USAID from spending additional funds on a program that, for various reasons, was not working.

Despite the guidance mentioned above, there is an emerging concern that cash transfer (and debt repayment, discussed below) cannot directly link USAID funds with positive (or negative) impacts on the education system. While the developmental objectives of USAID=s ESS programs are to support systemic and structural change in education systems that will provide an appropriate context for eventual student-level impacts, the political objectives of the Agency understandably require that effects be plausibly attributed to USAID funds. The controversy centers on the word "plausibly." As yet, there is no way to isolate the impact of USAID funds when they are added to the national treasury and pooled with other donors= funds; the recipient government is subject to performance conditions shared by multiple donors; and the ESS approach focuses on policy level changes, yet calls for "people-level" impacts in a relatively short time frame. The challenge is to devise an evaluation methodology which can both capture the incremental process of educational reform and convincingly link it to USAID support. (See Chapter 6 for discussion.)

Cash Transfer for Debt Service Repayment is another means of providing balance-of-payment support, in cases where the currency auction system does not meet USAID and IMF criteria, and/or the government=s financial management capacity does not meet USAID confidence standards. This approach has been used thus far only in Guinea and Uganda. USAID funds are disbursed for debt service payments, based on a debt repayment plan agreed to by USAID and the government on an annual basis. Debt repayment satisfies USAID dollar tracking requirements, particularly in countries where counterpart fund management of funds has proved problematic. U.S treasury funds are directly transferred to creditor institutions= accounts, essentially never leaving the transparent international banking system. The assumption is that the alleviation of national public debt service payments will liberate government revenues for other uses. To some extent, this mechanism contravenes a fundamental premise of NPA: that the government introduces USAID funds into its national finance system in order that they be subject to the same public accounting procedures as internal funds, and thus become linked to responsible planning, disbursement, and accounting practices. As in the case of "cash transfers," this mechanism does not prevent all the funds going to the education sector from passing through the government and ministry budgets.

There are several criticisms of cash transfer for debt service: USAID dollars are seen as helping "subsidize" the IMF and the World Bank since they are the largest creditors; there is limited fungibility of USAID dollars, so that relieving debt service payment will not necessarily free the equivalent funds for the sector; and debt repayment is a donor (and creditor) preoccupation, not a government one, and thus funds for debt do not buy the same level of influence with governments. However, since governments do give top priority to repaying IMF debt, USAID funds used for debt repayment do free up dollar equivalents in the budget. Therefore, as there exists relatively little actual bilateral debt, multilateral debt is not necessarily repaid in preference to bilateral debt. The case of Guinea, where this mechanism is used, shows that the government has fully complied with USAID conditions, including increased resources for the sector, demonstrating that debt repayment can have a positive influence on often recalcitrant ministries of finance. An unforeseen problem, which has affected debt repayment in Guinea, has been unanticipated debt rescheduling, which has reduced the amount of eligible debt service payment. This requires that the Mission stay apprised of the debt payment schedule on a continuing basis. In addition, the possibility of debt forgivenessCcurrently being discussed in the United StatesCcould eliminate the viability of this mechanism altogether. However, it does raise the intriguing possibility of

swapping debt for education.[70]

Cash Transfer with Special Account is used to guarantee that balance-of-payment support will directly benefit the education sector. USAID dollars are sold at the national currency auction; the local currency generated from the sale is placed in a "special account" within the treasury earmarked for education expenditures, or in a "special account" controlled by the ministry of education (a mechanism used in Ghana and Lesotho). These funds must then be tracked to the end-user. This ensures that the sector will enjoy the full benefit of USAID funds in a timely manner[71]. Also, none of the generated local currency can be diverted from the sector.

The criticism of this mechanism *as it is currently used* is that a special account circumvents one of the prime indicators of sustainabilityCthat funds must flow through the system to encourage reform. By using a special account, an "artificial" environment of support has been created. The government does not have to reallocate its budget nor does the ministry of education have to effectively work with the ministry of finance to obtain funds. Reform is restricted to the education sector, which has benefited solely from donors, and does not indicate a shift in national priorities. This "alienation" between the funding mechanism and government control is clearly illustrated in Ghana, where the funds are managed by a special project management unit and are not integrated into the overall ministry budget. This arrangement may do little to increase ministerial capacity for overall planning and management of resources. In addition, accountability is ensured by contracting with an international accounting firm, thus further marginalizing ministry involvement in fund management. There is, at base, little difference between this approach and the more traditional project approach, in which funds are under the control of groups outside the government. The trade-off is between assured funding and auditability on one hand, and capacity building and integration, on the other.

These problems could be avoided if the funds earmarked for education remain within the treasury and if the ministry of education, to access the funds, were required to follow established government budgeting and tracking procedures.

Projectized support, such as *PL480 funds*, is a fourth mechanism of providing budgetary support, separate from balance-of-payment support. PL480 funds, in addition to conventional contracts with institutional and personal service contractors, have been used to fund "traditional" projects and "projectized" activities in education. Local currency generated from the sale of designated foodstuffs for USAID-approved activities in the education sector. Its use must be tracked and documented at all levels in the system down to the end-user. The strengths of this approach are that it is quick disbursing, funds can be tracked and accounted for, funds can be linked to deliverables and outputs, and funds can be programmed. Its weaknesses are that there is heavy management burden to execute tracking procedures, there is a tendency toward an ad hoc use of PL480 funds, which is not always integrated into USAID education program, and many governments do not have the capacity to track funds adequately to satisfy requirements.

Use of this mechanism has proved controversial in Guinea, where PL480 funds supplement NPA funding. Proponents argue that it disburses funds directly to the ministry of education in a timely fashion, when the

[70] For a discussion, see Donors to African Education, 1993b. "Can We Swap Debt for Education?" *Donors to African Education Newsletter* 5:2.

[71] In Guinea and Benin, although adequate funds have gone to the sector, their release has been delayed by the finance ministries, causing operational problems.

ministry of finance is slow in releasing funds. Critics suggest that, *as currently used* in tandem with the existing NPA funding, PL480 funds provide disincentives to the government to meet performance conditions, because money can be more easily obtained through PL480 without making reforms.[72]

Conclusion

The two primary issues that recur in this discussion and that have framed the different financial mechanisms for budgetary support are the tension between sustainability and USAID control, and the trade-off between USAID control and fund tracking requirements.

Sustainability requires full government control of funds and the exercise of its free will in their allocation and expenditure through routine government budgetary and financial management procedures. Indeed, a prime indicator USAID uses to assess government commitment to reform is whether the government has, without coercion or donor earmarking, allocated sufficient resources to the education sector, and to levels and line items within the sector. However, it is these performance conditions that give USAID some assurance that desired educational reforms are taking place. As seen, however, in some countries, USAID is not satisfied that the government will perform as mutually agreed or, on the mistaken assumption that the full amount of budgetary support must go to the sector, is not convinced that this dollar-for-dollar allocation will occur. By earmarking funds for direct transfer to the sector, an important element of sustainability is lost, but a level of comfort may be gained.

The downside of earmarking funds or placing them in special accounts is that the tracking requirements for the funds increase considerably. The associated tracking requirements may exceed government capacity with the result that either 1) disbursements are halted (and program activities disrupted) when appropriate documentation is not provided, or 2) USAID must call in outside assistance to take over the accounting responsibilities for the government. This latter option could entail negative consequences for government responsibility and institutional capacity building if the budgeting and accounting personnel are displaced and/or left untrained, or routine tracking procedures for all funds are not institutionalized. Sustainability then becomes compromised.

Program designers and Mission management are confronted with hard choices. An understanding of the finance mechanisms and their implications for sustainability and management is key to making choices that best suit the situation.

[72] These funds, although burdened with rigorous tracking requirements, are essentially "non-conditioned," in that they are disbursed prior to fulfilling any but administrative performance criteria. This sends confusing signals about USAID expectations. PL480 can wreak havoc with the budget management process, essentially "shoving" line items off-budget. This can circumvent the government resource allocation system, so that improved allocation practices and procedures in the ministry of finance and ministry of education are lost. PL480 funds require special tracking and are not tracked and accounted for satisfactorily through routine ministry budgeting and accounting procedures. To some extent, these problems can be avoided if PL480 funds (1) are not used for recurrent costs; (2) are used primarily for budgeted investment cost and special studies not routinely included in the ministry budget; and (3) are provided to the ministry of finance, rather than to the education ministry, to finance approved budgetary expenditures.

4.4 Donor Coordination

The ESS approach surrenders much of the control associated with projects, relying instead on government and other donors. Donor coordination is therefore not a luxury but a necessary element of successful sectoral support. Donor coordination takes place at two primary levels.

- On one level, donors such as USAID and the World Bank provide budgetary support through very similar mechanisms. In this case, shared or mutually-enhancing conditionality assures support of a single policy and institutional reform agenda. In Guinea and Lesotho, for example, USAID and the World Bank share many of the same conditions, or have specifically designed their conditions to be complementary.[73] Collaboration has been addressed through shared development of donor programs—in cases of parallel or co-financing as in Mali, Lesotho, Guinea, and Uganda—or through coordination of complementary efforts—as in Benin and Ghana.

- On another level, coordinated provision of technical assistance and advice is equally important in assuring the success of the reform. This level of coordination is more complex because it often involves many donors, different institutions receiving support within a reform program may have their own agendas, and donor agencies have different philosophies or approaches to providing technical assistance. For these reasons, specific structures and procedures are required to help a ministry of education coordinate different, sometimes divergent, donor support.

In coordinating donor activity at this level, the most important lesson to date is that the principal responsibility for donor coordination should be with the government, preferably in the ministry of education. Donors may instigate sectoral meetings, attend roundtables, or share information among themselves, but unless the government takes the initiative and insists on donor adherence to its sectoral objectives and implementation plans, donors will revert to promoting their own, often competing, interests. This occurred despite donor meetings and professions of cooperation and shared intent.

The most successful mechanisms for coordinating technical assistance include a well-defined sectoral strategy, comprehensive assessment of institutional needs, standardized and transparent government policy on technical assistance (including issues such as the role of counterparts), and regular donor meetings chaired by senior, policy-level education ministry staff.

4.5 Agency Staffing and Management

The ESS approach has mistakenly been assumed to require less management input than traditional project assistance. In addition to being a management-intensive form of development assistance, the type of supervision and support ESS requires from USAID is quite different from that associated with project management.

Need for New Management Skills

[73] For example, in Guinea the World Bank and USAID share conditions on the percentage of the education budget going to primary, the share of the sectoral budget expended on non-salary items, and on primary unit non-salary expenditure. USAID then added a condition on the overall share of government budget going to education to address its particular concerns about government willingness to allocate resources to the sector sufficient to sustain the reform.

In managing project assistance, USAID=s involvement focuses on issues such as procurement, contracting for technical assistance, and assuring that Agency reporting requirements are respected. ESS programs, because they almost all include a project component, require similar management and supervision for those projectized elements. However, the policy and budgetary support aspects of ESS require new management inputs. Maintaining dialogue with government about policy direction and reform in the education sector necessitates thorough knowledge of the details of government decision-making and provision of a high caliber and broad range of technical advice.

Involvement of Senior Mission Managers

In addition to education-specific technical input, ESS programs also imply involvement of senior Mission management. General budgetary support in the form of an education NPA grant constitutes a contribution to a government=s macro-economic program. This implies that mission economists and senior managers stay informed about progress in macro-stabilization and the implications of ministry of finance operations for the education sector budget.

Better Communication Within USAID

At another level, the management of ESS programs requires clear and precise communication among different offices within USAID. Agreement among field mission technical and senior management staff, between USAID and its contractors, between a field mission and regional or Washington-based legal advisors, and between all these players and the Office of Development Planning in the Africa Bureau are essential to program success. Communication is necessary in reference to agreement on what conditionality means, on what constitutes satisfactory compliance, and, in particular, on what precise interpretation to associate with technical and legal language used in communication with governments.

Problems in managing many ESS programs have arisen because of conflicts between USAID's Washington, D.C. headquarters, regional offices, Missions, legal advisors, contract managers, technical advisors, and, in some cases, auditors, each of whom has his own opinion about what a certain phrase in a program conditionality "really" means. While actual incidents of ESS programs being derailed by this lack of shared understanding are limited (Namibia), the climate of uncertainty in communication, and the insufficiency of existing guidelines hamper field missions in their ability to respond to emerging circumstances in their programs.

4.6 Conclusion: Toward Better Design and Implementation

In order to improve the functioning of its ESS programs, the Agency needs to focus its efforts on four key areas:

- Improving its analysis of government commitment to reform and institutional capacity; using this analysis as the basis for deciding where and when to apply the ESS approach.

- Paying concerted attention to the implications for program effectiveness (and management burden) of design decisions such as the proportion of project and non-project assistance, the most appropriate finance mechanism, the organization and structure of technical assistance, and the nature and intent of conditionality (discussed in the next chapter).

- Understanding that donor coordination is an integral aspect of successful program-based assistance. This implies commitment to aiding governments in developing mechanisms for better managing donors.

- Accepting the shift to a new approach and all it implies in terms of changed roles and responsibilities, and the implications for accountability and communication.

Chapter 5. Crafting Conditionality to Support Reform

The previous chapter discussed ways in which the success of Education Sector Support (ESS) programs depend to a great extent on the match between the needs and capacities of a particular country=s education sector and the design characteristics of the ESS program. This chapter continues this discussion, with a particular focus on the design and use of conditionality. Again, the match between the structure and implementation of conditionality determines to a very great extent the effectiveness of conditionality in supporting reform.

As noted, disbursement of USAID grant funds in the NPA component of ESS programs is contingent on a government=s meeting specific prearranged conditions, collectively referred to as conditionality. Conditionality serves several purposes, but acts primarily as the means to ensure that certain policies or actions, seen by both parties as essential to the success of the ESS and government reform programs, take place. In addition, fulfillment of conditionality provides USAID with the justification required to release a tranche of funds.

There are four broad types of conditionality in existing ESS programs:

- *Financial Conditionality* specifies levels of education sector allocations and/or expenditures, usually in terms of education=s share of the budget and the percent of the sectoral budget going to primary education.

- *Institutional Conditionality* indicates specific policies, or administrative and institutional changes to be implemented, such as organization of the ministry, deployment of staff, and decentralization of responsibilities.

- *Programatic Conditionality* addresses technical elements of education reform, e.g., curriculum development, materials production, and teacher training.

- *Management Conditionality* establishes procedures or institutions to manage the ESS program, and often involves such things as setting up a steering or oversight committee, delegating responsibility, or developing action plans.

It is important to understand how conditionality can be used as a tool in education reform. Specifically, we ask whether some types of conditionality are more successful than others, and whether the manner in which USAID manages conditions affect their impact in the education sector. Different approaches to defining conditionality can facilitate or hinder program implementation. This analysis has identified ways in which the design of conditionality has an impact on implementation. Box 5.1 provides a general set of principles to guide the overall design of conditionality. The discussion that follows details particular aspects in the design of conditionality.

Box 5.1: Principles in the Use of Conditionality

Identify Policy Objectives	The context within which conditionality can effectively be articulated requires a clear identification of the larger policy objectives to which specific conditions will contribute.
Design Conditionality Carefully	To support the objectives of sustainability, host-countryownership and sector-wide reform, conditionality should balance flexibility, commitment, specificity, and scope appropriately within the country's circumstances.
Realize the Limits of Conditionality	It is important to realize what conditionality cannot do. Conditionality solves policy problems with technical solutions. Conditionality lacks a mechanism to ensure continued implementation of decisions after disbursement of funds. Conditionality cannot resolve the tension between pressure to push for compliance and to disburse funds.
Manage Conditionality According to Lessons Learned	The success or failure of conditionality depends to a great extent on how it is managed, and ESS is managment intensive. Communication between USAID and the government should be appropriately but not overly formal. The roles and responsibilities of each party should be clear. The emphasis should be on implementing the reform and not meeting conditionality. It is particularly important that all parties agree on the precise interpretation of conditions.

5.1 Policy Objectives

One clear lesson learned from the use of conditionality in ESS programs is that a distinction needs to made between the mechanism of conditionality and the end it is employed to achieve. The problems that have arisen in the use of conditionality are often be associated with a too-narrow focus on achieving compliance with a specific condition as an end in itself. To avoid that, the policy objective to which the conditionality is contributing needs to be cleary articulated from the outset.

The best example of successfully making this distinction occurred in the Uganda program. Four policy objectives were identified at the design stage. These were improving teachers' terms and conditions of service, increasing local participation in school management to improve quality and increase the equity of primary education, assuring a sustainable supply of instructional materials, and restructuring and rationalizing the primary teacher-training system. Specific conditions targeting discrete aspects of these policy objectives are defined on an annual basis. For example, to support the objective of a sustainable supply of instructional materials, USAID and the Ugandan government agreed to an initial condition requiring a plan for reforming ministry procurement procedures and setting annual targets for materials. Susbsequent conditions required that adequate funds be budgeted specifically for instructional materials and that the target numbers of books be procured and delivered to schools. In this manner, conditions can evolve as the situation warrants, as long as the overall objective is kept in sight. In addition, all concerned parties grow to understand that what is ultimately important is progress towards the policy objective, not just meeting specific conditions.

5.2 Flexibility

In the early ESS programs, Mali, Ghana, and Guinea, all conditions for each tranche of budgetary support were defined during program design. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that the nature and pace of policy reform can be predicted. Experience has shown that this is often not possible, as discussed in Chapter 2.

! *Loss of Leverage***.** In Mali, the NPA portion of the program was essentially derailed from the start. Inflexible interpretation of preconditions (particularly regarding sectoral budget shares for higher and primary education) made it impossible for USAID to respond to the little progress the government was making under admittedly difficult circumstances.

! *Delayed Disbursement***.** In Guinea, disbursements have averaged several months behind schedule as the government has labored to keep pace with an implementation schedule that was determined at the design stage.

! *Bending Rules of Compliance***.** USAID may find itself accepting less than ideal proof of compliance—equity conditions in Ghana and school construction in Guinea—because predetermined conditions cannot be altered. Thus, while the intent of conditionality is to help the government institute difficult changes, lack of flexibility in defining benchmarks can lead to bending the interpretation of compliance, at the risk of being counterproductive.

Later programs in Uganda, Namibia, Benin, and Ethiopia attempted to respond to the inflexibility of preestablished conditions for all tranches, using two approaches:

! *Define Conditions Early; Be Flexible Later***.** With this approach conditions precedent to the first and second tranches are defined in program design. Subsequent conditions are elaborated through program amendments on an annual basis (Benin, Uganda, and Ethiopia). This approach allows USAID and the government to negotiate important policy reforms or program benchmarks on the basis of progress to date. However, the approach requires that an official amendment process be undertaken each year, with attendant demands on Mission management input as well as the need for regional and/or Washington review.

! *Determine Conditions Annually*. The second approach involves reassessing progress annually and determining conditions through a "Letter of Intent" (Benin, Namibia, and Ethiopia). The Letter of Intent is a legal agreement between the government and USAID that identifies specific program accomplishments for a given year.

An advantage of these approaches is that USAID and the government must be clear about each other's expectations for a given year. If executed effectively, important policy dialogue can center on this annual target-setting, thus diminishing the need to bargain over interpretations of compliance. A Letter of Intent or an annual amendment to the program, builds in the need to communicate, reassess, and jointly define objectives and benchmarks. In this way a program can respond to critical policy issues that arise during program implementation. In Benin, for example, it became increasingly evident that education reform could be accelerated through a more decentralized approach. Amended conditions have therefore reflected a greater emphasis on decentralized control of budget and programing decisions.

One disadvantage of the Letter-of-Intent approach is the tendency to confuse statements of intention (i.e., objectives) with firm commitments to attain specific benchmarks. The most striking example of this is the case of Namibia, where government discussion of broad sectoral objectives in a Letter of Intent was legalistically interpreted as a binding commitment.

A second disadvantage is the tendency to translate program implementation concerns into conditionality. This has been the case in Benin, where the use of the Letter of Intent has tended to focus conditionality

attention on programatic changes (e.g., naming staff, compiling statistics, writing plans) rather than on policy-level reforms. The implementation of those programatic changes has been important for the government=s reform effort, but it is not clear that conditionality is the correct mechanism for addressing those concerns.

Conditionality Requiring Development of Plans

A final approach to flexibility in conditionality is evident in Malawi and Uganda, where initial conditions required the government to develop plans for reducing repetition, constructing schools, and developing gender-appropriate curricula. Additional tranches simply require that targets laid out in the original plans be respected. While this does not address the problem of the rigidity of predetermined later-year conditions, at least those later targets are based on government plans and not *a priori* design assumptions about the progress and pace of reform. Guinea=s administrative and technical conditions (teacher redeployment, equity, construction) are also expressed in terms of establishing and implementing plans. Other programs use this approach of explicitly requiring only a plan for certain reforms (e.g., restructuring the ministries in Lesotho and Benin). Subsequent conditions then refer to implementation of the plan.

5.3 Appropriate Specificity

Conditionality in USAID=s ESS NPA programs ranges from extremely detailed and highly specific to very general. Experience has shown that appropriate matching of the degree of specificity of conditionality to the stage of reform is critical to successful program implementation.

Early interventions in specific policy or technical areas of the education sector, require extensive background study and development of an overall strategy. For example, USAID=s support of reforms promoting girls= access to primary school in Guinea established an initial condition of conducting a study. Later conditions covered establishing a task force, and eventually formulating a sectoral strategy. This phased approach was intended to ensure that adequate baseline data would exist on which policy and program reforms could be built.

Interventions at a later stage, when sectoral attention to a specific issue is more advanced, call for the development of specific policies and implementation plans. In Benin, many sectoral studies had been carried out under an earlier UNDP/UNESCO project. When USAID intervened, the next important step was to develop specific action plans to implement the reforms recommended in these studies. Early conditions (as well as the focus of technical assistance) reflected this stage of reform.

When reforms have progressed sufficiently beyond the study, strategizing, policy, and planning stages, the achievement of specific outputs is targeted through conditionality. Some examples of this include implementation of CRT in Ghana, construction of schools in Guinea, and provision of materials in Lesotho.

The general rule is that plans must be specific enough to provide useful and relatively unambiguous guidance. The specification of financial conditions in Namibia and Benin are stated in such general termsCavailability of sufficient resources to implement the reformCthat compliance is almost impossible to judge. An extreme example of a general planning condition is evident in the conditionality for second tranche disbursement in Mali. The program required a ministry plan for "restructuring its secondary

general, technical and vocational, and higher education system." While this condition may provide flexibility, the utility to the government of so broad a plan is questionable. At the same time, overly-specific conditionality ties the hands of implementors, and tends to involve USAID in micromanaging the sector rather than supporting the host country's reform effort.

Achieving appropriate specificity requires knowledge of the context. Guinea, for example, made use of both general and specific conditions. In terms of girls= access, conditions were quite general, as described above. Regarding financial conditions, however, Guinea has very detailed conditionality. Targets are set out for education=s share of the overall budget, primary education=s share of the education budget, percentages for non-salary inputs, and per student annual expenditure on pedagogical inputs. In addition, financial conditionality requires verifying both budgeted and actual amounts spent in these categories. The government has met (or exceeded) all of the detailed financial conditions, and a recent reassessment of the program has indicated that further detail would enhance the pedagogical impact of increased resource flows to the sector.[74]

In both Guinea and Benin, the emphasis on actual expenditures has helped ministries of education establish systems to improve the monitoring and accounting of resource use in the sector.

The most detailed set of conditions are contained in the Lesotho program. As many as 19 conditions (compared to five to eight in other programs) for each tranche address such items as appointment of personnel to specific posts, fixed numbers for hiring teaching personnel, and detailed incremental increases in the education budget. In addition, conditionality in the Lesotho program covers a broad range of policy issues including finance, staffing, testing, curriculum development, teacher training, restructuring of the ministry of education, provision of classroom inputs, EMIS, and teacher support. The degree of specificity in the Lesotho conditionality, even though requested by the government, has proven onerous in terms of reporting as well as compliance.[75] Implementation details deemed necessary to meet conditionality are drawn from the government=s own sectoral plan. Again, one could ask whether conditionality is the appropriate mechanism for what is basically the monitoring of implementation.

Creative ways need to be found to target the appropriate problem with conditionality. Even the most specific conditions may fail to achieve their intended purpose. The financial conditions in many of USAID=s ESS programs allow a great deal of latitude of expenditure. For example, quality issues are generally addressed by requiring the government to increase the percentage of its primary education budget going to non-salary recurrent expenditures. Across USAID=s ESS programs, governments have successfully met this condition. However, proof of expenditure does not necessarily or immediately translate into quality improvements for a variety of reasons:

- The items purchased under this rubric may be of dubious pedagogical value, such as headmasters= desks or clocks, rather than instructional materials.

- Quality inputs are not effective by themselves. There may be little effect in providing textbooks without training teachers in their use.

[74] For example, detailing specific budget lines to be targeted rather than just non-salary recurrent expenditures is a way to ensure that resources are being targeted to classroom-level inputs and not just administrative costs.

[75] As discussed in Chapter 2, a major policy condition concerning shared responsibility between government and private providers of education (such as churches) has not been met.

- Pedagogical inputs may be purchased but not reach the classroom—they might be sitting in warehouses, stacked in school directors' closets, or illicitly sold in the market place.

- It is unclear whether the mandated increases in non-salary recurrent expenditures are sufficient to increase quality, as little is known about optimum expenditures or levels of private expenditure by parents. In Guinea, for example, the required increase for non-salary recurrent expenditures went from US$0.20 to US$4.00 with little or no study of the mix of "ingredients" (and their costs) that could best boost classroom learning, beyond the donor assumption that the additional funds would primarily be spent on textbooks.[76]

USAID's stated goal of equity is liable to suffer similar problems of assumptions not articulated or captured in its conditions. While other non-financial conditions may address equity considerations—such as increased educational opportunities for girls and/or rural children—few ESS programs include budgetary conditions that underscore this concern. Again the condition of increasing non-salary recurrent expenditures serves as an example. None of USAID's ESS programs specifies that particularly needy or disadvantaged regions or schools should receive a disproportionate share of these expenditures. As a result, some countries have used a formula which increases per student expenditures evenly across the board. Well-endowed schools receive the same increase as poor schools, despite their better-off status.

In response to this limitation, Benin and Namibia (also proposed for a second phase in Guinea) are adopting a "fundamental quality level" approach, which targets a baseline resource level for all schools, based on budgetary conditions. This approach has positive implications for both the effectiveness of material inputs and the equitable distribution of resources. In order to establish the minimal level of school quality for learning to take place, governments, in consultation with stakeholders, must define the package of inputs and its costs. Furthermore, they must identify the regions or schools that will receive the inputs, excluding those which have already attained the fundamental quality level.

5.4 Appropriate Scope

By its nature, education reform is broad in scope. All the government reform programs supported by USAID cover several aspects of the education sector, from financial and administrative issues (planning, budget, and expenditure monitoring) to detailed pedagogical concerns (book production, teacher training, curriculum development). Within a given program, there may be a few focused conditions (Uganda, Malawi, Guinea, Ghana) or a large number of conditions covering a broad spectrum of issues (Lesotho). This distinction speaks to how a program makes use of conditionality.

Policy-Based Conditionality

Where conditions are limited in scope, USAID's approach has been to target those policy or institutional changes seen as most critical the for success of sectoral reform. This could be described as a *policy-based* approach to conditionality.

[76] In fact, non-salary unit expenditures have reached US$10 per student, while there remains little evidence that the qualitative inputs necessary for the reform have been purchased. This demonstrates how unrealistic an arbitrary target figure can be.

! In Guinea, additional non-salary resources and redeployment of teachers were seen as essential to the government=s ability to expand and improve primary education. More efficient deployment of existing staff permitted the gross enrollment ratio to leap from 28 to 36 percent in just three years. The additional non-salary expenditures permitted the delivery of essential pedagogical inputs. Though more effort is needed to target non-salary resources better, Guinea has provided its schools unprecedented levels of resources.

! In Uganda, "the inadequate income received by teachers" was identified as a "binding constraint on improving the quality of primary education." To address this, USAID and the government agreed to require real increases in primary teachers= salaries. The government articulated an objective to raise teacher compensation to what it termed a "minimum living wage" of about 70,000 Ugandan shillings per month. Progress on this major policy reform outpaced original estimates as teacher salaries are now at 80 percent of that target. The effects of this improvement have begun to be seen in the number of people seeking advertised teaching positions and entering teacher training colleges.

! Also in Uganda, the government reformed its textbook procurement policy, ending 15 years of monopoly arrangements and institutionalized corruption in textbook supply by requiring free and fair competition among private publishers. The reform also decentralized book selection decisions to the school level, so the actual users decide which books to purchase.

! In Malawi, girls get into primary school, but their persistence is poor. Policy and institutional reforms seen as key to improving female persistence were therefore targeted through program conditionality. Elimination of fees for non-repeating girls, development of a tracking system, a plan for reducing repetition, and the preparation of gender-sensitive curricula were seen as instrumental in removing obstacles that prevented girls from completing primary school. Therefore, they were included as conditions.

! In Ghana, the introduction of criterion-referenced testing was an important aspect of achieving and monitoring qualitative improvements in basic education. Thus, the adoption of criterion-referenced testing was made a condition of the ESS program.

! In Benin, the definition and implementation of a "fundamental quality level" standard was made a condition to facilitate the ministry=s equity and quality improvement plans.

Implementation-Based Conditionality

Where conditions cover numerous specific elements of reform activities, conditionality may be said to be used as a device to monitor program implementation. This could be described as implementation-based conditionality. Examples of implementation-based conditions include:

! In Lesotho, hiring of personnel for the National Teacher Training College.

! In Benin, collection of school data and publication of the annual statistics report.

! Staffing of decentralized offices in Ghana.

! Establishment of a working group on equity in Guinea.

Of the two approaches, which works better, policy- or implementation-based conditionality? While governments have successfully met conditions under both approaches, two issues argue for a policy-based approach. First, where policy-based conditions have been met, sectoral impact is greater: for example, increased resources in Lesotho, Guinea, and Malawi; redeployment of teachers in Guinea; elimination of girls= fees in Malawi. The impact of the implementation of specific conditions is limited to the element of the program targeted by that condition: the creation of steering committees in Benin and Namibia; the creation of 260 additional teaching posts in Lesotho; and the piloting of equity projects in Ghana. Often the larger ramifications of overly specific conditions are lost, or do not exist at all.

Second, it is assumed that the leverage of conditioned budgetary support should be used to help education ministries realize significant and possibly difficult policy changes. USAID=s major program input is used to broker impact commensurate with its significance in overall program design. To use budgetary support to bring about minor implementation changes is overkill. This is best illustrated by a situation in which disbursement is delayed because of non-compliance with an implementation-based condition. Should the Government of Lesotho=s balance of payments situation and the education sector=s share of the budget be held hostage to the possibility that the education ministry could not fill the Primary and In-service Division Coordinator positions at the National Teacher Training College?

5.5 Successful Conditionality

Cumulatively, over a dozen tranches of NPA have been disbursed under USAID=s ESS programs in Africa, and an equivalent number of sets of preconditions have been met. What are the results of implementing those conditions? Many of the impacts attributed to USAID=s education programs can, in fact, be traced to government compliance with program conditionality (teacher redeployment in Guinea, fee waivers in Malawi, the development of action plans in Benin). While it is not possible to know whether the changes brought about through conditionality would have occurred anyway, it is clear that the promise of disbursement on compliance has, in many instances, served as an incentive for governments to accelerate the pace of reform. Some examples follow:

- In Guinea, the government recognized the need to make better use of teaching personnel through redeployment of existing surpluses. However, the Ministry of Education saw redeployment as politically difficult, and put off the hard decisions needed to operationalize it. Both USAID and the World Bank required as a condition for release of the second tranche of budgetary support an implementation plan for the redeployment of teachers. As a result, the ministry was engaged in a dialogue that resulted in a strategy that effectively diffused most of the opposition to redeployment. As noted, the impact on primary-level enrollment has been impressive.

- In Uganda, in response to conditions agreed to by USAID and the government, teacher salaries have increased from about US$8 per month to $46 per month in two and a half years, far outpacing the 14 percent inflation rate during the same period. This was favorable treatment for teachers in comparison to other public sector employees. In raising teacher salaries the government recognized the need to control expenditure on teachers by instituting ceilings on the number of teachers at each primary school. USAID conditionality was flexible enough to accomodate the emergence of this strategy. The development of the staffing ceilings was made possible through a nationwide census of all primary schools with government paid teachers. 8,443 schools were enumerated in one day. This survey resulted in the elimination of over 6,000 absent teachers from the payroll, saving the equivalent of over $300,000 per month. The census also provided the ministry with reliable baseline data on the number of schools, classrooms, and teacher housing arrangements, the number of teachers and their

qualifications, and the number of pupils disaggregated by sex, grade, and school. This information is now being used as the basis for planning several interventions.

! In Malawi, where gender equity was initially more USAID=s objective than the government=s, conditionality encouraged the government to establish an office responsible for developing gender-appropriate curricula and promoting girls= access and persistence. Progress has been made in defining the issue and establishing an institutional base from which to address it. In this way, USAID has succeeded in placing gender equity on the sector reform agenda.

! As USAID=s ESS program got underway in Benin, the ministry had not developed a detailed plan for operationalizing its reform objectives. The second tranche disbursement was conditioned on the development of specific action plans for implementing sectoral reforms in 16 areas, ranging from finance and planning to curriculum development and community participation. USAID provided technical assistance. The pressure of meeting conditionality helped the ministry articulate the specifics of its reform program and begin to see how the various elements could be coordinated.

! In terms of sectoral financing, available data show that the intended budgetary impacts of ESS in the education sector have been respected.[77] In particular, as seen in Table 5.1:

  P Education=s share of government allocations and expenditures has increased to or stabilized at desired levels

  P Primary education has received a greater proportion of education resources through new allocations and intra-sectoral reallocations

  P Non-salary expenditures have increased

This is good news, representing the commitment of African governments to education reform and suggesting that the ESS approach does influence fundamental policy changes in the allocation of funds to levels of education and among budgetary line items.

[77] See Joseph DeStefano and Karen Tietjen, 1993. *Budgetary Impact of Non-Project Assistance in the Education Sector: A Review of Four Countries*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Analysis, Research, and Technical Support.

Table 5.1: Changes in Education Expenditures in Four Countries

	Country	1990	1991	1992
Education as a percentage of overall government budget	Benin	B	35	37
	Ghana	22	21	21
	Guinea	14	25	25
	Malawi	13	13	15
Primary Education as a percentage of total education budget	Benin	B	48	48
	Ghana	43	44	45
	Guinea	35	37	36
	Malawi	43	50	57

5.6 The Limits of Conditionality[78]

In assessing the utility of conditionality in ESS programs, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations inherent in using conditionality as a means to broker policy reform.

Limits on Technocratic Approaches to Policy Problems

Many problems are simply not amenable to technical solutions. Multiple factors determine the policy decisions a government can make, and a given sectoral strategy often represents the best compromise among competing interests. Helping governments engage in dialogue with stakeholders and enhancing that process through the introduction of objective analytic tools is the best hope of addressing this constraint. It is naive to assume that conditionality will overcome political obstacles.

Lack of Mechanisms to Ensure Continued Implementation of Decisions Taken in Response to Conditionality

Unless policy changes grow out of the locally-recognized need to address a problem in the sector, there is nothing to prevent governments from reverting to the previous state after demonstrating compliance with USAID's conditions. The best way to address this limitation is to base program conditions on mutually-agreed changes that are seen by all parties (not just USAID and the government) as essential to improving the education sector.

[78] The following discussion is drawn in part from Luis Crouch, 1993. *Success in Policy Reform through Policy Dialogue*. (Staff Working Paper). Research Triangle, North Carolina: Research Triangle Institute.

Conflict Between Pressure to Push for Compliance and to Disburse Funds

For conditionality to work, there must be the possibility of non-disbursement. Furthermore, there needs to be some middle ground between disbursement and cancellation of a program. In effect, the Agency needs to allow its Missions the latitude to permit a program to proceed at its own pace. Reform is a complicated endeavor, and experience has shown that progress often follows a jagged path. Pressure to disburse funds in a given fiscal year should not force a Mission to accept unsatisfactory compliance with conditionality, and Missions should see delaying disbursement as a viable option in managing their education programs. Such delays should not provoke harsh judgment for non-performance of the ESS program.

5.7 Managing Conditionality

Time-Intensiveness

Managing conditionality is, essentially, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the government about the progress of reform, which is a time-consuming, management-intensive undertaking.

Appropriate Formality

Finding the appropriate degree of formality is important to successful implementation of the reform program. Overformalization through official letters and communiques sometimes works against policy dialogue, as governments may see USAID=s insistence on written reports and exchanges of information as diverting energy from the real business of implementing the reform. On the other hand, a lack of clear official agreement on the interpretation of the conditions and requirements has led to miscommunication and divergent expectations.

Roles in Managing Conditionality

The basic management format for ESS programs is simple and common to allCthe establishment of conditions precedent to disbursement and annual compliance review. Just as the nature and content of conditionality strongly determine the outcome of an assistance program, the way in which those conditions are managed and implemented is equally significant. USAID is responsible for three tasks:

! agreeing with the host country government on the interpretation and application of conditionality;

! assisting the government to implement the components of the reform that are addressed through conditionality; and

! verifying the government's compliance with the conditionality.

USAID may employ contractors to help fulfill many of its responsibilities, in which case the responsibilities of the contractor correspond to USAID's. However, it is critical to distinguish between those roles only USAID can fulfill, and those for which a contractor is better suited. Senior USAID Mission officials need to take part in the high-level dialogue and negotiation involved in agreeing on the interpretation of conditions, a central aspect of policy dialogue. This is especially true, as is often the

case, when ESS program conditions have implications extending beyond the education sector, e.g., resource allocation, financial reforms, and civil service management reforms. Verifying compliance is also an internal USAID function. On the other hand, contractors may be better suited to providing the government with technical assistance in implementing its reform program.

The host country government=s role is to come to agreement with USAID on the interpretation and application of conditionality, complete or manage the tasks required to implement the elements of the reform that will satisfy conditionality, and produce the required proof that the specifications of the conditionality have been met.

Implementing the Reform not the Conditionality

It is important to note the specific language used to describe the second responsibility of both USAID and governments. The emphasis is on implementing reform elements that will satisfy conditionality. In managing conditionality, USAID and governments often make the mistake of shifting the emphasis from implementing elements of reform to simply trying to meet conditionality. For USAID, this has meant using technical assistance to compile conditionality reports rather than assist governments to complete the tasks they are supposed to report on. On the part of ministries of education, this has meant putting effort into producing documentation rather than working on implementing reforms.

USAID often contracts technical help to help the government manage conditionality. In this case, the responsibilities of the technical advisor correspond to those of the government. However, that role should be limited to supporting the implementation of changes leading to the attainment of reform objectives, and, therefore, compliance with conditionality. The use of technical assistance to negotiate on behalf of the government subverts the intention of policy dialogue. Employing technical support merely to produce documentation of conditionality undermines the tenet of capacity building.

Some of the misapplication of conditionality can be traced to the nature of a condition. Conditions requiring only general plans or reports often lead to the production of documents that bear little relationship to reform. Such problems may be overcome by well-directed assistance or through continuous dialogue aimed at defining the specifics of a plan. A good example is the teacher redeployment in Guinea. The government, though wary of potential political resistance, was anxious to meet conditionality, both to obtain the budgetary support and to keep the reform program on track. For this reason, they were quite open to donor support in developing the plan. Multiple drafts were circulated and discussed in detail, allowing ample time to negotiate particularly sensitive issues, such as compensation for redeployed teachers.

Agreement on the Interpretation of Conditions

Another critical element in managing conditionality is agreement between USAID and the host country government on the interpretation of conditions. This is especially important in cases where Letters of Intent are used. The danger is that a ministry will use the Letter of Intent as a statement of sector priorities and objectives instead of a clear indication of what it is committed to accomplishing in a given year. When USAID=s program includes annual amendments of conditionality, government participation in the amendment process is critical to ensure mutually agreed upon interpretations. In all programs, and especially those where conditions are predetermined, an annual exercise in negotiating acceptable demonstration of compliance for each condition (conducted at the beginning of the program year) helps avoid confusion over intentions at the time of review.

Tranche Reviews

All USAID=s ESS programs undergo yearly reviews of conditionality, which are referred to as tranche or annual reviews. The primary objective of the annual review is to assess government compliance with conditionality so that USAID can authorize disbursement of the corresponding tranche of budgetary support. Demonstration or documentation of compliance is reviewed by the Mission. If judged satisfactory, it is submitted to a regional legal advisor for a final ruling. In some cases, conflicting interpretations at these two levels have greatly complicated the review process. An example of this lack of a shared interpretation of conditionality within USAID occurred in Namibia, where the problem led to a virtual suspension of the budgetary support component of USAID=s program.

In addition assessing compliance with conditionality, an annual review provides a forum for assessing the progress of the government=s reform. In this manner, the tranche review can place conditionality within the context of an assessment of the overall status of reform. In many programs, especially those making use of the Letter of Intent, the annual review also serves as the time for negotiating expectations and conditions for the coming year. Obviously, the value of the negotiations is compromised when the tranche review is limited to an exchange of documents and official communications. Often, an overly formalistic approach has reduced conditionality review to a simple exercise of the government figuring out what minimal effort is required to satisfy USAID, and USAID checking off on a list of documents. An open, transparent exchange in which both sides present their assessment of progress and their expectations of accomplishment and support is the best antidote to a ritual exchange of paper.

There are a variety of approaches to preparing and conducting tranche reviews, implying varying degrees of effort on the part of government (as well as management and time on the part of USAID). In preparing documents for the formal review, some ministries have produced armloads of paper, with substantial diversion of effort and technical assistance away from more substantive work. To the greatest extent possible, ESS programs should try to minimize the generation of documents specific to a tranche review, and instead capitalize on plans and policy papers that the government would be producing for its own needs anyway. Where ESS programs involve multiple donors in parallel or cofinancing arrangements, joint reviews using a single set of documents can greatly diminish the ministry's need to repeatedly compile information in different forms for different donors.

In summary, conditionality can play a creative role in supporting educational reform if designed and administered strategically, giving thought to the needs and capacity of the education sector and the most appropriate role for USAID to play in a particular context. It is clear that conditionality does not lessen the responsibility of the Agency for careful design and oversight. Instead, it changes the role of the Agency to one of support.

Chapter 6. Assessing Impact and Accounting for Change

This chapter continues our review of the operational issues involved in Education Sector Support (ESS) program management. The focus here is on assessment, essentially the issues and challenges confronted in reporting and accounting for program impact. Chapter 3 explored conceptual issues in assessing the impact of USAID=s education programs in Africa. In essence, it asked whether USAID=s ESS programs can produce the expected DFA-mandated results within the time frame allotted. This chapter asks whether the actual impacts of ESS programs are adequately measured and reported, and whether they can be. The challenges to assessment of impact are:

! The unprecedented need for educational data exceeds the capacities of most ministries to collect and analyze.

! The conflict between data needs and capacity building means that the very systems in need of reform are the ones that must document improvement.

! Poor baseline data threatens the credibility of existing information and subsequent calculations of change.

! Inadequate ESS program reporting systems fail to measure the change that has occurred and demand documentation of unrealistic impacts.

! The equation of comprehensive reform with limited USAID inputs leads to exaggerated expectations of what the Agency can accomplish.

! Problems of attribution make it difficult to specify the precise impact of USAID assistance.

6.1 The Unprecedented Need for Educational Data

The lack of reliable data collection and reporting mechanisms within ministries of education and governments complicate USAID=s ability to assess the extent of education reform, and, by extension, the impacts of USAID activities. Since most ESS programs support national education reform, the data required to gauge change are both extensive and detailed. Unlike more focused projects of the past, ESS programs view the entire national education system as the unit of analysis.

To determine whether improvements in student outcomes have taken place, detailed nationwide education and population data are needed to calculate such things as gross enrollment ratios and repetition, dropout, and completion rates. Equity objectives and planning needs require that student data be disaggregated by gender and locale, e.g., region, district, rural/urban. USAID gives priority to primary education. But to ascertain the relative status of primary education, vis-a-vis secondary and higher education, data must be collected at all three levels. The ESS program focus on system-level change requires data on resources allocated to and within the sector, on expenditures for various educational inputs, and on the number of textbooks, teachers, classrooms, etc. already existing and newly added to the system. Finally, school quality indicators at the student-levelCsuch as reductions in repetition and dropout rates, or increases in

promotion, completion, and transition rates—ideally should be supplemented with more direct measures of student achievement through standardized pupil testing and assessment systems. Several ESS programs also include experiments, such as Ghana=s equity pilot projects, or Mali=s work in the Koulikoro region schools. Such activities also entail additional data collection and analytic efforts.

These formidable data needs clearly exceed what USAID or any donor can expect to collect on its own, nor should donors bear the primary responsibility for data collection. Responsible education planning and management involves collection and analysis of school, student, and education resource data, a function central to a reformed and productive education system. USAID must, and indeed should, rely on the education ministry=s statistical service, financial office, and/or other data collection offices to obtain information for impact assessment.

However, reliance on host-country information systems does not mean that the Agency is convinced of their accuracy. Five of the nine ESS programs using NPA recognize in their design documents the inadequacies of government management information systems and have provided some assistance to this area. (See Table 6.1) Similarly, three ESS programs contribute to the development of student assessment systems. That only half of the total program countries are receiving assistance in education management information systems and student assessment from USAID does not imply that the remaining countries have adequate reporting systems. Often, other donors are providing the assistance, as in Ghana; sometimes, no one is.

Unfortunately, the technical assistance provided may be insufficient for the task of developing, implementing and training counterparts to operate an extensive enough education management information system to provide for the needs of an ESS program. ESS programs generally limit such technical assistance to one resident advisor. A single advisor cannot be expected to develop and implement data collection instruments and procedures, processing, analysis, and reporting/dissemination systems. Information systems have multiple components—ranging from school mapping surveys and annual headcounts to detailed expenditure reports and student achievement tests. Education management information systems are rightfully the work of multiple teams of specialists and networks of enumerators reaching down to the school level. In Mali, the advisor struggled to produce statistical yearbooks with a small, inexperienced team of counterparts. In Guinea, when the young French computer specialist left the country, the ministry=s statistics and planning unit found itself incapable of accessing even rudimentary data in its newly-computerized data base. This bodes ill for the timely or appropriate response to USAID=s demands for accurate information of a certain type, in a specific format, on a regular basis, whether for conditionality review, API reports, or program evaluations/reviews.

Various ESS programs have coped with this in different ways. As mentioned, some provide technical assistance. In Benin, USAID supports the development of an education management information system by providing two long-term advisors in information management and planning. In Guinea, the ESS program added a computer systems specialist and an educational planner to its existing technical assistance package. Similarly in Malawi and Ghana, decisions to add information systems specialists to the projectized component of the ESS programs demonstrates the recognition that data availability is critical to program management and assessment.

6.2 Conflict Between Data Needs and Capacity Building

At the same time that data collection, information reporting systems, and ministry capacity are being developed, these infant information systems are expected to provide comprehensive, credible statistics on system inputs, expenditures, and outputs on an annual basis, to respond to conditionality and API reporting requirements. Given the amount of time necessary to develop systems and capacity, collect, process, and analyze school census data, it may not be reasonable to expect that student-level outcomes can be reported on an annual basis or even by the end of the USAID program in some instances.

The ESS approach places a heavy burden of statistical and financial reporting on the ministry of education. At the same time, it aims to build capacity by making the government responsible for proving it has met performance criteria. The dilemma is obvious: can an institution that has been judged to lack planning, budgeting, accounting, and reporting skills be expected to prepare credible documentation proving compliance with performance conditions? Even more ambitiously, can a system in information infancy be reasonably expected to provide comprehensive, detailed data on the state of an entire education system? Probably not. As noted, in some ESS countries, USAID program designers have recognized these limitations and provided technical assistance to aid and train the government in statistical and financial reporting. Emerging evidence from the field shows that the Agency was right, but did not go far enough. Technical assistance is essential, but generally has not been provided in sufficient quantity both to prepare reports and provide training to increase institutional capacity.

Not surprisingly, the immediate exigencies of report preparation for tranche review usually take precedence over staff training and capacity building. Indeed, in Ghana, capacity building in the area of finance, budgeting, and accounting has been so sacrificed to reporting and auditing that an outside accounting firm has been assigned these tasks. In Guinea, both technical advisors assigned specifically to train counterparts in the finance office as well as short-term consultants have been given the task of preparing documentation of conditionality, at the Mission=s request (see Chapter 5 for discussion). It was originally hoped that the ESS approach would lessen the need for technical assistance. However, experience has shown that ESS is management- and report-intensive, and that capacity building is at the heart of educational reform. Consequently, the assumption that reporting requirements in the initial years of an ESS program will be met with government data and limited technical assistance is, in most cases, unfounded.

An unstated *a priori* condition of ESS is that a well-functioning information system be in place. However, a good information system is generally the hallmark of a well-functioning education system that probably would not be a candidate for USAID support. A solution to this impasse is to ensure that ministry education management information systemsCin planning, statistics, testing, budgeting, and accountingCare equipped with sufficient technical assistance so that the training and development of staff does not take second place to USAID reporting requirements.

Table 6.1: ESS Program Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Systems[1]

Country	Data Avail-ability	Primary Data Source	Addition-al Data Source	Non-Standard Reports[80]	Respons-ibility	No. External Evals. Planned/ Executed	USAID EMIS TA*	USAID M&E TA*
Mali	Poor	! MOE Stats	! Sample Schools	! Research ! Quarterly ! Stat Handbook	! USAID ! USAID ! MOE	1/1	1 LT	1 LT
Ghana	Good	! MOE ! PMU/ MES	! EIP Studies ! Spot-checks ! Attitude Baseline	! Research ! Status ! Annual Report ! Research	! PMU ! USAID ! PMU ! USAID	2/1	PMU, ST	PMU, ST
Guinea	Adequate	! MOE Stats	! Special Studies	! Research ! Stat Handbook	! USAID ! MOE	2/1	0	ST
Lesotho	Good	! MOE Stats	! Special Studies	! Research ! Quarterly ! Stat Handbook	! MOE w/ TA ! ! MOE	2/0	1 LT	ST {IIEP}
Malawi	Adequate	! MOE Stats	! Special Studies ! Baseline Sample	! Research ! Research	! USAID ! USAID	2/0	0	ST
Benin	Poor	! MOE Stats	! Special Studies	! Research /Analysis ! Annual Stats	! MOE w/ TA ! MOE	2/0	2 LT	1 LT
Namibia	Poor	! USAID Baseline		! Quarterly	!	4/2	0	ST
Ethiopia	Poor	! MOE, USAID base-lines	! Special studies, ! Periodic surveys	! Research, Annual report	! USAID/MOE/ Regions	4/NA	3 LT	1 LT
Swaziland	ND*					2/1		
South Africa	Poor Nat'l	! USAID Baseline	! Regular Investiga-	! Analysis	! NGOs	2/0	1 LT	ST

80 Non-standard reports refer to documentation other than the routine USAID reports of tranche review documentation, Assessment of Program Impact, etc.

79 Most of the data in this table were derived from PAAD documents. In some cases, they may not reflect current assessments of data availability. For example, both Ghana and Malawi programs have revised initial estimations about the adequacy of data.

		! NGO Data	tions					
Botswana	Good							

*LT=long-term, ST=short-term, PMU=project management unit, ND=not determined

6.3 Poor Baseline Data

Impact reporting is further confounded by poor baseline data, which are needed to show the extent of change accomplished during the ESS program. It is obvious that in those countries where education management information system assistance is required, the preprogram baseline data should be regarded with caution. Statistics have sometimes been inflated, deflated, or skewed for political reasons. Entire information units have been dismantled because of the politically unpalatable information they bring to light (as in the case of preintervention Mali). New standards and conventions for collecting and tabulating the data required by the new educational reform may introduce inconsistencies that either magnify or diminish the rate of change.

Additionally, information is often not reported in terms that respond directly to USAID objectives. Education data may be disaggregated by gender, but not by urban-rural residence. More often than not, existing information is limited to simple head-counts and a few compound statistics, such as percentages. Seldom are more sophisticated calculations, such as cycle or equivalent years, presented. The result is that meaningful baseline data must be amassed at the beginning of a program. However, as noted above, where local capacity is weak and on-the-ground technical assistance scarce, it is difficult to produce the statistics that define an accurate "starting point." In Namibia and South Africa, USAID supported sample-based baseline surveys to deal with the problem of inadequate baseline data. Elsewhere, ESS programs have supported baseline data collection for special interventions, such as the social marketing activity in Malawi, the equity study in Guinea, and the parents- association study in Benin. (See Table 6.1)

6.4 Inadequate Program Reporting Systems

In preparing this report, it became evident that data of the "right" sort (i.e., program impact indicators) are difficult to come by. Despite the existence of logical frameworks with indicators of impact at student or even system levels, most available documentation is not oriented toward accounting for impact or answering questions of how and to what extent access, efficiency, equity, and quality have been affected. Differing accountabilitiesCtranche reviews for performance conditions, mid-term evaluation reports, and annual API reportsC structure field reports and their contents. While a plethora of documentation exists, much of the information in these reports does not provide accurate or sufficient data on impacts, or compelling proxy measures, particularly at the system-level.

Education program activities and progress are tracked, monitored, and evaluated principally at the field level, under the supervision of Mission staff and generally through the offices of long- and/or short-term technical assistance. Many of the reports prepared are standard cross-sectoral programsCtranche review documentation, USAID portfolio or program reviews, USAID annual and semi-annual progress reports, institutional contractor status reports, and consultant reports. While many of these reports focus on the everyday activities of program management and performance condition reporting, the API reports and the obligatory external evaluations scheduled during program design are expected to report on indicators and benchmarks signifying impact.

As shown in Table 6.1, ESS programs have approached impact assessment in similar ways, by:

! Avoiding creation of parallel data collection systems, and relying on the ministries of education statistics and/or planning offices;

! Making provisions to supplement ministry data with special studies targeted at a particular research question, surveys and baseline data collection on a sample basis, and targeted regional investigation; and

! Expecting data for impact analysis to be reported in annual statistical handbooks produced by the ministry of education and in research reports generally prepared by expatriate and/or local technical assistance outside the ministry;

! Planning for two external evaluations, one formative at the mid-point, and the other summative at the end of the program; and

! Providing some technical assistanceCeither short- or long-termCto assist ministries in managing information, monitoring, and evaluation.

Nevertheless, despite the often elaborate evaluation plans discussed in the PAADs, information on ESS program impacts is not readily available. To a large extent, this is due to the narrow, student-outcome definition of ESS program impact (discussed in Chapter 3), and the overwhelming focus on government accountability with respect to performance conditions rather than to the progress of the reform.

Monitoring and reporting on performance conditionality should not be a substitute for reporting on impacts. Tranche review documents are geared to conditionality, which does and should not require changes in student outcomes. (See Chapter 5 for a discussion of conditionality.) Tranche review documents do reflect system changes, frequently in the policy and institutional areas, and less often in school and community areas, such as resource reallocations, or the number of classrooms constructed and/or teachers trained, all of which promise future student-level impacts. Conditionality is often framed as incremental movement toward system change, e.g., the annual assignment of numbers of district supervisors, and the development of work plans. However, seldom do tranche review reports relate these activities to important changes in system structure, often best captured in the school "arena."

For example in Guinea, on the input side, donors have significantly assisted the government in its educational reform effort with infusions of funds. The government has indeed made notable policy changes and resource reallocations. On the output side, student-level outcomes have improved. But how, exactly, are these changes related? It should be possible to relate the redeployment of teachers to an increase in staffed classrooms and a corresponding increase in available student places, yet the program reports do not provide this essential data. The Guinea program may not have to struggle to obtain this data as it has fortunately and unexpectedly produced the DFA-desired "people-level" impacts. However, other programs might not be able to demonstrate student-level impact as quickly. It is imperative that the path to reform and its results be understood and documented, so that successes can be replicated, the Agency can develop a greater appreciation of intermediate system-level impacts as reliable portents of "people-level" impact, and the knowledge base about the process of educational reform can be expanded.

Conditionality review is not a substitute for routine evaluation. Ideally, mid-term or periodic evaluations should fill the gaps left in conditionality review and provide data on intermediate, system-level impacts,

both those specified in the logical framework and "unanticipated" impacts. However, thus far, periodic evaluation has proved less than satisfactory for several reasons. First, several years often separate these reviews. Both Mali and Ghana had entered their fourth year of implementation before the first mid-term evaluation. Second, evaluation teams cannot be expected to produce student outcome or other quantitative data if the data have not already been collected and processed. Finally, based on analysis of mid-term evaluations of ESS programs in Guinea and Mali, there appears to be a tendency to focus on projectized activities rather than on reform components. This is due, in large part, to the nature of the evaluations, which must recommend mid-course corrections. By necessity, they focus on "outputs" or "deliverables." In relation to the budgetary support portion of the ESS program, this means either ascertaining that tranche conditions have been met and funds released, or that the desired student-level outcomes have been achieved. Alternatively, for the projectized portion, numerous and specific inputs must be tracked to determine their impact on immediate beneficiaries, in most cases education ministry personnel targeted for assistance. Because projects make up only a small part of ESS programs and an even smaller part of the general reform effort, the indicators of impact associated with projects tells only a small part of the reform story. Alone, they can seldom satisfy impact reporting requirements. But, since the scope for action under the control of USAID is mainly limited to the projectized portions of ESS programs, it is almost inevitable that project-type operational concerns will receive the bulk of attention. As a result, it is difficult to get a sense of the magnitude of the reform accomplished.

The Assessment of Program Impact (API) system is designed specifically to report on the impact of the overall Mission program, generally a seven to 10-year time frame. Indeed, when an ESS program is a component of the Mission=s larger program of activity, the API system may be the best means by which impacts are tracked and reported over time. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, API indicators for strategic objectives as well as targets, tend to emphasize student-level changes; naturally this means that the student-level impact will be of paramount concern. The bottom line is that the API reporting system cannot be expected to accurately present the extent and type of system-level change associated with an ESS program. This shortcoming has not gone unappreciated; recently, more system-level change indicators have been included in the API system, particularly for tracking targets. Nonetheless, as stated earlier, this points to the need for better ESS program monitoring and evaluation systems, so that the API system will not be expected to "pinch hit" in their absence.

6.5 Confusion of Educational Reform with USAID Interventions

USAID=s ESS programs in Africa are designed to support government-instigated and led educational reform, yet the measures by which program effectiveness is currently assessed are centered on student outcomes in enrollment, persistence, and achievement. This means that ESS programs are accountable for producing a reformed education system as well as longer-term student impacts. This, in turn, leads to confusion about USAID=s role in educational reform, its power to effect educational reform, and ways its activities should be evaluated.

USAID does not control either the government or the reform. In most countries where public education predominates, reform of the education system can mainly be effected by the government. The government=s willingness to change the status quo is paramount, and resource reallocation is key. The role that USAID has adopted, in principle, is to support educational reform through financial support of budgetary shortfalls due to the costs of transition and through strategically-placed technical assistance that can help with the adjustment process. The rationale for the tenet of donor collaboration derives from the recognition that USAID alone cannot provide either all the funds or all the technical assistance needed.

ESS programs are usually designed in relation to other donor activities in the sector, and in many cases, are part of a joint effort. Nonetheless, with or without other donors, it is unlikely that all the resources needed to effect all the system-wide modifications and train all the personnel required will be available at once. Educational reform takes place over time, and USAID=s support is only a small piece of the grand stratagem.

Recognition of these factors is essential to realistic expectations of Agency impact. Yet, there is a tendency within the Agency to conflate USAID=s education assistance with the education reform itself. (Given the nature of the Agency=s goal of supporting systemic reform, this may be a difficult tendency to avoid.) The general budgetary support of many ESS programs practically dictates that the system as a whole be evaluated, even if USAID support represents only a fraction of the system=s resources. This inevitable overlap is strikingly evident in ESS program logframes, whereCas some evaluators have complainedCprogram "outputs" and End of Project Status indicators (EOPS) attempt to capture the impacts of all the inputs to the systemCof government and donors alike. But given the many intervening variables outside USAID control, how can its success or failure be judged? If the reform is not moving as quickly as possible, is the ESS program deficient? If World Bank funds do not flow as rapidly as required to accomplish a key activity, is the ESS program a failure?

The answer to these conundrums is not clear. On the one hand, USAID has "bought into" the idea of reform. If reform is not occuring according to reasonable criteria of impact, then the ESS program might be said to have failed. On the other hand, if some positive change is occurring due to the ESS program, albeit not as quickly as hoped due to circumstances beyond USAID's control, then the Agency may indeed be doing all that can be hoped for any education intervention. A preliminary step out of this puzzle lies in clearly defining reasonable impacts tied to the various stages and various arenas of reform. A hierarchy of impacts for educational reform, based on five years of ESS program experience, could be developed to serve as a loose template for program design, implementation, and evaluation. Such a framework would, of course, be amended according to each country=s circumstances. As discussed in Chapter 3, the current impacts expected of ESS may not be realistic, but a "codified" set of process indicators has not been offered in their place.

Although many insightful, sensitive, and appropriate process indicators can be derived from program logframes and completed evaluations, the criteria for determining change are often vague or ambiguous. EOPS indicators are designed to capture and express in measurable C"objectively verifiable"Cterms the impact of the education program. According to agency guidance, they are to communicate "concisely and unambiguously" the conditions that signal successful achievement of the program purpose, so that "proponents and skeptics can agree on (program) status and what the evidence implies." EOPS should be "targeted and expressed by quantity, quality, and timeliness."[81]

Unfortunately, EOPS often deviate from this prescription. On occasion, education EOPS indicators are neither measurable, objective, or verifiable. There are instances in which the EOPS indicators merely restate the goals of the ESS program. For example, the Lesotho program expects to demonstrate "effective" MOE structure, financial management, evaluation, and planning, but offers these goals as EOPS. Actual measures of quantity or quality are often omitted. Proof of the Namibia program=s success

[81] Management Systems International, 1992. "Project Design Process Course" in *The Logical Framework Instruction Guide*. Washington, DC: USAID, Training Division, Office of Personnel Management. In some cases these problems have been noted and modifications made in recent designs. In Swaziland, for example, the Modified Project Amendment of 1994 cites EOPS which have overcome these problems, that is they are measureable, objectives and verifiable.

in achieving a more effective basic education system includes a "more coherent, balanced, and relevant curriculum," adjectives that should be explicated. Other EOPS lack specificity: the Uganda program cites as evidence of the improved quality of classroom instruction the "evidence of improved classroom teaching; evidence of continuous assessment; and evidence of resources flowing to schools." As proof of impact, these EOPS leave too much to interpretation as designers= intentions recede into memory. Such lack of clarity constrains accurate assessment of reform progress and program impact. Inexperience in supporting systemic education reform and the NPA modality undoubtedly explains the opacity of these indicators. However, there should now be enough experience to develop a more precise set of impact criteria.

6.6 Problems of Attribution

If change occurs while an ESS program is in effect, can the results be attributed to USAID intervention? This question of attribution or "credit" perplexes evaluators and confounds the analysis of impact. As discussed above, the loosely articulated and partially understood linkages in an education system make it impossible to ascribe clear cause-and-effect associations between education inputs and student outcomes. Likewise, the process of education reform, which experience teaches us to view holistically, is not amenable to strict control or easy tracking. To make matters murkier, the characteristics of the ESS approach make it more difficult to link USAID inputs with system results.

The emphasis of USAID=s ESS programs on systemic policy and structural reform rather than on classroom interventions more directly associated with student-level outcomes derives from the DFA's goals of lasting and sustainable change. This objective calls for developing a sound delivery system as a precondition for an improved learning environment and better education. In education systems that must undergo drastic restructuring to become effective, it is difficult for ministries to do everything at once, much less tightly supervise the reform at the various tiers of the system. For an education system to produce desired student outcomes, change must simultaneously take place at many levels. For example, for textbooks to reach students and improve learning, the curriculum may have to be revised, books written and produced, systems put in place for their purchase/delivery/ storage, and teacher training in their use provided. Resource and capacity constraints will undoubtedly limit what a ministry and donors can do at a given time. Consequently, the distance between, for example, developing a line-item based budget and improved student performance is great in temporal and conceptual terms. Given the limited scope for intervention and other contributing variables, our ability to identify and track direct effects is limited.

By definition, the NPA component of ESS consists predominantly of budgetary support, and is seldom earmarked for education per se, making it difficult to "plausibly" attribute changes in the education system and results in student outcomes to USAID financing. Nonetheless, there is a tendency to force the issue of attribution and attempt to link these impacts directly to U.S. dollars. Perhaps these ambiguities are the reason program evaluators seem to be most comfortable with the projectized aspects of ESS programs, where results can be ascribed directly to USAID resources. In fact, in Guinea the mid-term evaluation criticized the ESS approach precisely because it was impossible to develop a USAID dollar-reform calculus.

Finally, the principle of donor coordination complicates directly crediting USAID with specific reforms and student outcomes. The rationale for coordinating aid programs makes sense. United, donors can surely exert more influence on governments and their ministries of education than individual donors

alone. Complementary programs and "pooled" budgetary support funds provide significant impetus and incentive to reform. However, joint and contributing donor programs make it exceedingly difficult to disaggregate influence and attribute change to one particular donor. When multiple donors provide budgetary support, a single donor can hardly be selected as uniquely responsible for change. Likewise, if one donor provides budgetary support and another technical assistance, it is not fair to attribute to technical assistance system impacts that were also made possible by funds leveraged through budgetary support. For example, a UNESCO textbook designer may be credited with developing a new series of textbooks, but it may have been USAID and World Bank budgetary support funds that allowed the government to fund the textbook development unit, develop the production and delivery systems, and fund the purchase of new books. A holistic approach to educational reform and donor coordination may simultaneously promote educational reform, yet rob the individual donor of its glory.

Of course, donors are driven to seek credit for results to justify the investments they have made. Still, though the current dollar figures going to education in Africa are unprecedented in USAID=s history, they do not begin to cover the cost of operating education systems. Even when coupled with other donor contributions, the relative amount of external financing as a percentage of overall recurrent educational resources is small, on the order of 10 to 20 percent.[82] In view of these figures, it is hard to argue that impact can be significantly attributed to any one donor.

6.7 Conclusion

Accountability and meaningful impacts are the by-words of USAID=s ESS programs. Ironically, the current application and structure of ESS programs may militate against these very precepts. First, the assumption that ESS requires little technical assistance is belied by the tremendous data requirement of painting a picture of educational reform at its various stages and the usually fragile information systems existing in African countries targeted for assistance. Second, the existing internal reporting systems established by the Agency and the Africa Bureau are not geared to capturing the myriad indicators of meaningful change in an education system. Third, confusion over USAID=s role in educational reform, the limited extent of its control over reform impacts, and the subtleties or inexactitudes of attribution tend simultaneously to inflate expectations of what ESS can achieve and depreciate the actual impacts it has contributed by either not recognizing system-level impacts, or not being willing to take credit for a joint effort. In combination, these practical problems of impact assessment and accounting can conspire to make the ESS approach an unwieldy means of support.

The potential for disappointment with ESS programs, however, can be alleviated if several misapprehensions are corrected. Specifically:

- Recognize up-front that the heavy data demands to monitor and assess impact of systemic educational reform will require ample technical assistance in statistics, finance, and testing, if both reporting and capacity building are to occur.

- Amend Agency reporting systems to reflect field and ESS program realities. Specifically, both formative evaluations and the API system should incorporate more system-level impacts.

[82] In Ghana, the PREP tranche release of $7 million per year is about 8 percent of the recurrent budget for primary education; the World Bank began providing an annual average of $13 million per year, starting in 1994. In Guinea, USAID and the World Bank's average annual disbursements are the equivalent to about 20 percent of the recurrent budget for preuniversity education.

! Compile a "codified" list of meaningful system-level impacts to guide future program design and evaluation efforts and enhance understanding of the educational reform process. These indicators can be compiled on the basis of ESS program experience to date.

! Recognize that ESS programs are not synonymous with educational reform. Lack of impact may not be due to inadequate design and implementation, but to lack of host-country capacity and commitment or donor solidarity. USAID may not be able to remedy the problem. In such cases, the decision question should not be *How do we amend this program?* but *Should we attempt to support educational reform in this country?*

! Accept the idea that impacts resulting from a joint program do USAID as much credit as impact that can be tracked directly to its own dollars.

Conclusion to Part II

Part II asked whether USAID has applied the Education Sector Support (ESS) approach effectively to education reform in Africa. The answer is a qualified "yes." There are several encouraging examples where USAID=s ESS program support has led to education improvements at both the system and student levels. Experience suggests that the ESS approach to systemic reform can work, but that there are myriad, and often unanticipated, challenges associated with its implementation and use of the NPA modality. In some countries, these operational demands have greatly taxed the Agency=s ability to manage, assess, and report on its education programs. Our analysis has identified particular problem areas as the divergence between Agency expectations and actual ESS program impacts, decisions on whether to support and how to structure an ESS support program, the necessity and requirements for conducting successful policy dialogue, the provision of technical assistance, and obstacles to reporting and accounting for impact.

Fortunately, for all the ESS programs that have suffered difficulties, delays, or setbacks, there are programs that have creatively surmounted problems to serve as models for replication or adaptation. Our analysis of both positive and negative experiences leads us to draw the following lessons. There should be:

! Deeper understanding of the process of educational reform and appreciation of the probable system-level impacts of USAID=s ESS education programs.

! Stricter application of criteria about where and when ESS programs should be initiated.

! More realistic appraisals of the importance and implications of the mechanics of implementing a program, such as the choice of support modality or project assistance; the type of financing mechanisms; and the content, structure and management of performance conditions. In particular, the Agency needs to become aware of choices likely to distort the goals of the ESS program or undermine the validity of USAID=s approach to supporting educational reform.

! Full recognition that the ESS approach to educational reform is management intensive and requires the continuous involvement of education and top-level mission personnel in a policy dialogue with an in-depth knowledge of governmental decision-making processes.

! Acknowledgement that meeting the challenges of reporting and accounting for impact requires a combination of less ambitious expectations for documentation, more technical assistance in the short term, and less insistence on tying impact directly to USAID dollars.

The risks associated with attempting to support and leverage education reform are greatClarge amounts of money are at stake, and USAID=s control of the process is limited. But the rewards can be even greaterCthe tangible and lasting improvements in the education systems and student outcomes in a number of countries unprecedented in Agency experience in Africa. USAID's challenge is to develop clearer guidelines to improve the implementation of its approach to sustainable, systemic reform.

Part III. What Have We Learned and Where do We Go from Here?

Chapter 7. What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go from Here?

7.1 Introduction: The Systems Approach to Achieving Sustainability

The previous chapters focused on the Education Sector Support (ESS) approach that USAID has adopted to promote educational development in Africa. In our discussion, we have attempted to unbundle the various assumptions underlying USAID=s sector strategy and modalities with the intent of determining whether these unstated preconditions have been met, on the one hand, or have proved valid, on the other. The universe we have explored has necessarily been highly bounded to education, policy reform, and to donor assistanceCspecifically USAID's. Before proceeding with a synthesis of lessons learned about supporting education sector reform, we would like to place our favorable analysis of the sector reform approach in the larger development context.

The goals of "development" and development efforts have remained constant since the first forays into modern development assistance in the Third World following World War II. Essentially, the intent has been to help people "lead better lives" by increasing welfare through freedom from hunger, disease, and ignorance. This imperative has generated many models of development and intervention, the majority of which claim economic growth and pluralistic society as their foundation. Nonetheless, the hard lessons learned in the past 30 years of foreign assistance converge on a central point that is key to the Agency=s current development philosophyCdevelopment must be *sustainable*.[83] The argument for sustainability finds its origins in many sources: the dwindling natural resource base and concerns about the environment; recognition of more realistic goals for economic growth and consequent constraints on public spending; wealthier countries= fears about the coming "chaos"; potential floods of refugees coming to their shores; and their inability or unwillingness to continue footing the bill for humanitarian and unproductive "development" programs. Donor inputs can only be expected to be limited and finite.

A new vocabulary associated with sustainability has entered the development lexicon, with terms such as participation, policy and system reform, adjustment, and equity. More than fashionable buzzwords to be sown throughout project justification documents, they represent the accumulated experience and best thinking of the development communityCboth developing nations and assistance agencies. While each concept and issue encapsulated in these terms is a necessary condition or vehicle for attaining "sustainable development," the current thinking is that all work in combination. Government policies cannot be successful without acceptance and support by the stakeholders and the population at large. Acceptance requires participation and ownership; people must share equally or equitably in resources and resource allocation decisions, whether they are educational opportunities, health facilities, or tax burdens. Participation and ownership are not only important to decisions about who will receive the benefit and bear the cost of public goods, but they are essential to the development or reform of the "systems" that

[83] Sustainable development refers to the dynamic process of building lasting capacity to respond to changing circumstances, needs, and opportunities. Countries where sustainable development occurs are those where there are both the human resources and the institutions to manage social change effectively. To be sustainable, development must be increasingly reliant on indigenous human, institutional, and financial resources and capabilities. (See USAID, 1994. *Guidelines for Strategic Plans (Draft).* Washington, DC: USAID, Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development.)

distribute resources and provide services.

Transfers of funds or services can be made on an individual basis with emergency relief programs, but this person-to-person approach can hardly be justified as a regular means of doing business. This points to the development of *systems* for service delivery to reflect stakeholder decisions, eliminate biases, inequities, and inefficiencies. Systems—public or private sector or both—must be established and/or reinforced to ensure that the greatest number of people benefit from the service at the least cost to society and within the financial and technical capacity of the nation.

Although the ultimate goal of any assistance effort is to improve human welfare, decades of experience have shown USAID and other donors that the only sustainable means of doing so is through systems designed, operated, maintained, and ultimately financed by the country. USAID was among the first to recognize that donor funds are unlikely to achieve lasting impact if they do not aim to support the development of national systems and institutions.

USAID was one of the first donors to attempt to translate these ideas into action. ESS and NPA operationalize this knowledge into a coherent approach. Sustainability—defined by local ownership, sectoral reform, and internal financing—is its founding concept and fundamental parameter. The vector of intervention is the system, be it education, health, or agriculture. Consequently, both the approach and corresponding modality have focused on leveraging and supporting policy changes that put in place or restructure the mechanisms to provide needed services on a continuous basis. The delivery of services will lead to improved welfare, on the one hand, and indigenous management and finance of the delivery systems will enhance sustainability on the other. The disastrous spiral of increasing dependence on external assistance may thus be broken.

7.1.1 Sustainable Development of Education Systems

Basic education plays a fundamental role in any long-term effort to rehabilitate a nation=s development. Economic, population, environmental, and political reforms cannot be reached except from the platform of literacy. Evidence continues to grow that the human resource and basic education focus is an essential part of the "virtuous cycle" of economic growth and population stabilization.[84] Recently, it has also been also shown that investment in basic education not only contributes directly to economic growth and social well-being, but also acts to reduce income inequality.[85] USAID=s support to national programs of education reform attempts to integrate human resource development into countries= broad political and economic development programs.

Since 1988, USAID has worked to reverse declines in the provision and quality of basic education in Africa by dramatically increasing its support for human resource development. The Agency has initiated new basic education activities in 12 countries, sharply expanded financing for basic education, and focused on the reform and sustainability of education systems. The central strategies of the Agency=s assistance for the education sector are to:

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[84] See Barro et al. (1993) for recent evidence from 98 countries that the level of education of the population is a strong predictor of GNP growth. This is one of the most robust findings of the literature on the determinants of economic growth.

[85] N. Birdsall, D. Ross, D. and R. Sabot, 1994. "Inequality and Growth Reconsidered," (paper presented at St. Antony=s College, Oxford University, February 1994).

- Link educational development to sustainable government finance decisions within the framework of macro-economic constraints.

- Support policy level interventions required for attaining sectoral reform.

- Develop institutions as the foundation for sustainable capacity to implement policies and programs.

- Treat the education system as a whole.

- Coordinate the financing of national policy reform program with other donors.

Our analysis has shown that although the shift in USAID=s strategic objectives for the education sector is laudable, Agency management procedures have not kept pace. These procedures are based on the assumption that rigorous management techniques can control inputs and activities that will lead to specific development impacts. The procedures were designed for managing targeted project interventions such as building schools and providing specific technical assistance and participant training.

With this change of strategy, current methods used for planning and managing discrete, focused projects have become counterproductive. Under project management, USAID and its contractors take responsibility for design, financing, management, monitoring, and evaluation. A predetermined, fixed plan is prepared with an implementation schedule. A logical framework relates inputs to processes, outputs, and impacts. These management techniques are intended to control development activities and to achieve specific project objectives. They do not encourage the flexibility, experimentation, and institutional learning that are essential to helping the intended beneficiaries of aid to achieve their objectives.

These ideas mirror experience from other sectors and donors. Development problems are extremely complex; social and institutional change involves a staggering variety of people and organizations with different perspectives and agendas. We know many of the necessary conditions, but hardly ever do we know the sufficient conditions for change. In spite of complex and systematic analytic procedures for designing assistance programs, our support to sector-wide reform is undertaken with relatively little knowledge of the conditions in schools or of the government=s institutional capacity and potential for leadership. We have little certainty that specific policies or interventions will produce specific results. A recent review of the Improving the Efficiency of Educational Systems (IEES) project carried out in 10 countries over an eight-year period concludes that:

- Personnel at the central level of education systems have little effective control over activities at lower levels of the system, particularly at the school level.

- Changes in national policies may not necessarily result in changes in school procedures.

- Very little is known about the linkages and alternative strategies available to influence the instructional quality of schools or the learning outcomes of pupils.[86]

Donor assistance that supports broad sectoral policy changes involving such interrelated, complex areas

[86] See David W. Chapman, 1993. *Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Schooling: What Have We Learned from Eight Years of IEES Research.* (draft paper). Albany, New York: State University of New York at Albany.

as institutional reorganization and decentralization, instructional systems, and school management cannot work according to a rigid plan that attempts to set specific priorities, mechanisms, schedules, and expected outcomes. Such practices may work with a self-contained project to construct classrooms or produce instructional materials. But they become dysfunctional when dealing with a poorly understood, complex political and bureaucratic environment of multiple actors and agendas. In such an environment, a logical framework remains conceptually useful for identifying goals, purposes, and objectives, and for mapping the expected changes that indicate whether a program is on track towards those ends. However, logframes prove counterproductive when they straightjacket the process of reform. Success is contingent on a continual learning process, where knowledge is used to modify strategies as constraints, and opportunities appear during implementation.[87] Management tools such as logframes need to reflect this orientation.

In this final section, we examine how the Agency, other donors, and governments might organize planning and management procedures to cope more effectively with systemic, policy-based reform programs. We first look at the preconditions that warrant budgetary support for national education policy reform. Next, we examine how the non-project and project modalities of assistance can be related to stages in the cycle of reform. Then, we discuss technical and managerial methods consistent with the Agency=s strategic objectivesCsector assessment, policy dialogue, conditionality, institutional development, linking of school and national-level reforms, monitoring, and evaluation. The aim is to focus on positive examples of operational practices, seeking to lay the basis for future, more specific Agency guidelines on managing support for sector reform.

7.2 Preconditions for USAID Support of Education Reform

What is the strategic rationale for USAID=s support to the education sector in a specific country? It cannot be based on an assessment that the education system is failing. The ESS approach suggests that USAID support be contingent on the strong likelihood that the Agency=s activities will be transformed into systemic, sustainable reform. Often, USAID can do little to influence conditions that affect the education sector. In cases where these conditions are unfavorable, the best decision may be not to provide education support, but to use the ESS program to establish conditions favorable to reform.

As has been noted, much of the effectiveness of USAID=s education assistance is determined by factors essentially outside the Agency=s controlCnational cultural, macro-economic, and political processes, structures, and performance; civil service conditions, staffing and performance of the bureaucracy, including the ministry of education; and the political and bureaucratic processes resulting in education sector policies. While it may be possible for the Agency to contribute to better civil service functioning and sector policy formation, USAID is but one of many actors on the national scene and can only influence, not control, these complex systems.

[87] Rondinelli provides an excellent analysis of the context for development projects and argues persuasively for the approach taken in this section (1993, *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adoptive Approach to Development Administration*. New York: Routledge).

Box 7.1: Preconditions for ESS

- *Macro-economic policies and economic performance should be favorable, and the government should be committed to human resource development and basic education as a strategy for growth.* Economic recovery and growth enable the government to sustain reform initiatives. Commitment to education ensures that government will give high priority to allocating resources needed for basic education.

- *An authentic sector reform should be underway.* Policy conditionality with financial and technical assistance should not attempt to create a reform (and indeed probably cannot), but they can support the development of an existing reform.

- *The political environment should be moving towards greater civic participation in policy formation.* Such an environment makes it possible to hold public debate and negotiations in which a wide range of information and viewpoints are considered, including those that are openly critical.

- A public policy review and analysis process should be in place (or planned) in the education sector. *There should be a consensus around the goals of education reform* among parents, local authorities, teachers, the private sector, the education ministry bureaucracy and cabinet.

- The ministry of education should have committed leadership and a reform strategy. The strategy should reflect a general "vision" of what is needed and the stages of institutional development needed to move towards that vision. Effective reform efforts are characterized less by an assertion of the solution, than by an inclination towards institutional learning and action in pursuit of articulated goals.

- *The sector should have feasible plans to develop the necessary institutional capacities* to manage finances associated with new ESS program activities; acquire and use information on system performance to monitor change, inform decisions on implementation, and reassess objectives and strategies; and implement the other aspects of reform.

- *There should be sufficient information to monitor change at both process and student levels.* African education systems often lack the basic student-level data needed to measure system performance. Donor agencies, including USAID, often lack appropriate intermediate process measures to indicate whether or not the institutional changes are taking place that necessarily precede student-level impacts. It is necessary to have basic educational statistics and trends, and some indication of student learning, as a basis for planning and monitoring.

7.2.1 Preconditions for ESS Programs

This review suggests that the following macro and sectoral level conditions are necessary for effective use of the ESS program approach. Where these conditions do not exist, either USAID should use its resources to help establish the necessary conditions, or it should not be involved in the sector. As discussed in Chapter 2, several conditions are necessary for an effective ESS program, as summarized in Box 7.1.

It is critical that the Agency take the time to analyze the conditions prevailing in the country, make an informed decision about whether or not to proceed, and develop a strategic plan in line with these preconditions. Such analysis and strategic planning should not be undertaken lightly or hurriedly, as is sometimes the case, for problems will then surface during implementation, when, for example, the policy lacks broad support, the data and systems for monitoring change are not in place, or the system lacks the institutional capacity to lead a large-scale reform. Our review suggests that the scale and nature of ESS programs have, in some instances, overwhelmed the capacity of both the Agency and host-country capacity for program design and implementation.

7.2.2 Gaps in Agency Understanding of Preconditions

This review has identified a number of ways in which sufficient consideration may not be given to the context in which ESS programs will be implemented:

1. *Lack of real reform*. There has been a tendency for USAID design teams and governments to claim that a policy reform is in place when key actors in implementing ministry programs—including school heads and teachers—are unaware of the reform agenda.[88]

2. *Too little analysis of reform environment*. Program designs sometimes neglect careful macro-level analysis. Education sector design documents often lack assessment of government economic, political, and human resource conditions and policies, and the central government=s institutional capacity to implement those policies.

3. *Minimization of sector realities*. Given the short time assessment and design teams typically have, and the significant gaps in basic information within African countries, there is a tendency to underemphasize or ignore fundamental weaknesses in the education sector.

4. *Too little analysis of policy itself*. Program design documents may claim there is an education sector reform policy in place but do not analyze that policy in terms of its sources, technical competence, feasibility, leadership, and support. In short, there is not a careful analysis of the national sectoral reform policy context to guide design decisions.

5. *Lack of national policy leadership*. In some cases, there has been insufficient time or host-country capacity to permit effective nationally-led sector assessments, policy analysis, public participation in policy dialogue, or negotiated strategies for reform[89]

6. *Donor-driven agenda*. Agency-commissioned sector studies and program designs often reflect an analytical agenda, an orientation, a language (Agency jargon, acronyms, or buzz words), or a largely donor-determined rather than host-country driven process. Stakeholder participation in critical program design strategies and decisions is minimized or excluded due to Agency procedures, language barriers, and time pressures.

7. *Lack of institutional analysis*. Institutional capacity is seldom analyzed. Specific weaknesses may be addressed in the design, such as establishing or strengthening the management information system, but the policy issues that contribute to that weakness are often ignored. This leads to an overestimation of institutional capacity to manage reform, and an overly optimistic scenario for the scale and timing of institutional reform and performance. In addition, the capacity to manage the process of change is often neglected in favor of technically-specific areas of institutional development.

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[88] In Malawi, both UNDP and USAID cited the policy declarations in the education sector 10-year plan in their program design documents: UNDP was supporting a policy of decentralization as a central strategy, while USAID was promoting girls= education. In any case, the Ministry of Education=s Planning Unit, during a recent mission, was not able to secure a copy of the plan.

[89] It should be noted that in many of the countries, national policy reviews and reforms were underway prior to USAID=s program design. In Benin, Guinea, Ghana, Lesotho, and Uganda there were significant national efforts to develop and articulate reform policies.

8. *Leaving the school out of the equation*. USAID interventions tend to focus on national and central ministry-level policies and institutions. This tends to reinforce centrist, top-down reform strategies. The consequence is that there is little analysis either of the school and classroom conditions within which learning takes place, or an examination of strategies for community/school and classroom-level reform.

9. *Lack of baseline data.* The Agency has defined indicators for assessing access, equity, internal efficiency, and learning achievement, yet implements ESS programs in countries lacking baseline measures of system status. Lack of such baseline indicators prevents tracking change. Yet building the institutional capacity to acquire and report on such indicators requires at least two to four yearsCwhen organizational conditions are favorable. These realities can confound claims that reform programs will be guided by system-level education indicators.

10. *Lack of system-level, process indicators*. Agency procedures and documents often lack measures to track policy changes and institutional improvements.

This listing is not intended to suggest that USAID is at fault for all these conditions. However, the Agency and those it reports to are responsible for taking seriously the conditions within which it attempts to bring about education reform.

7.3 Modalities for Assistance at Different Stages of Educational Development

Although the formulation and implementation of educational reform is not a linear process, and educational improvement is characterized by multiple levels of change, it is, nonetheless, possible to characterize the status of an education system in terms of a reform cycle. Some systems are declining in terms of capacity and services; others are static and not performing effectively. Still other systems are initiating a change process; and some have implemented reforms, enabling them to provide effective, efficient services. The following discussion considers the ways in which USAID=s modalities for educational assistance should vary according to the status of an education system (see Table 7.1):

In countries where the preconditions for reform are not in place, yet USAID determines that the country merits support for human resource development, the strategy should be to assist the development of those preconditions required for educational reform. ESS is clearly not a good approach in such situations, since the country lacks a national reform program or sufficient management capacity to implement a reform. It should be reiterated that ESS programs cannot leverage policy changes that the government has not embraced itself, however beneficial such policies might theoretically be. However, USAID can use project assistance to promote the necessary preconditions, by providing technical assistance for policy dialogue, sector analysis, management reorganization, and training.[90]

Table 7.1: Stages of Reform and Modalities for USAID Education Assistance

[90] Crouch describes a variety of effective strategies that have worked in Latin America in education (1993, *Policy Dialogue and Reform in the Education Sector*. Washington, DC: Research Triangle Institute, for USAID, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean). White also provides useful guidance on supporting the conditions of policy reform (1990, *Implementing Policy Reforms in LDCs: A Strategy for Designing and Effecting Change*. Lynne Rienner Publishers).

Key Variable	Appropriate Role of USAID in Supporting Human Resource Development
ESS Preconditions Not In Place	**Project Assistance** ! Targeted at promoting development of preconditionsCpolicy dialogue, sector analysis, institutional capacity
Stage 1: ESS Preconditions In Place ! Reform process initiated ! Lacks policy dialogue process, reform definition, institutional capacity, information system	**ESS aimed at promoting donor collaboration to:** ! Support policy analysis and dialogue ! Build institutional capacity ! Establish information base
Stage 2: ESS Preconditions In Place ! Policy reform policy and strategy defined ! Implementation begun	**ESS aimed at:** ! Building institutional ownership and capacity ! Implementing the reform
Stage 3: Effective and sustained reform has taken place	**Project Assistance** ! Targeted technical transfer, technical assistance, and training
Stage 4: Reform Assessment and Adjustment ! Start of new cycle	**Project Assistance** ! Targeted and limited

In countries that have defined (or have begun to define) a national reform, ESS is useful in supporting that reform. In these circumstances ESS places the responsibility for reform management with the government, and thereby contributes to the critical institutional commitment and capacity needed for sustainability. In considering countries in the midst of reform, it may be useful to provide a further breakdown of stages in the reform cycle.

At *Stage 1*, a country has initiated educational reform, but has not developed a process for policy analysis and dialogue, and has not defined its reform program. Typically, Stage 1 countries lack both the institutional capacity, the information system, or the short-term financial resources to manage a reform program. In collaboration with other donors, ESS programs should aim to support the processes of policy analysis and dialogue, build institutional capacity within the ministry and related institutions, and help establish the information base needed to develop, monitor, and manage the reform programs. Project assistance would play a supportive role in the form of training, research, and institutional development. Countries such as Namibia, Mali and Malawi can be characterized as being at Stage 1.

At *Stage 2*, a country has defined a policy reform and strategy and is beginning implementation. Ideally, reform policies have been developed through both public dialogue and technical analysis and include strategies for financing, phasing, institutional, and staff development. The implementation process should include provision for monitoring, refining, and adjusting the policies. In the best case, implementation involves institutional learning based on continuous flows of information. The NPA component of ESS programs is helpful in reinforcing policy implementation, especially in terms of the domestic financing needed for the reform. Nonetheless, most countries need project assistance to build institutional capacity

in the ongoing process of staff development and management of the reform. As national capacity increases, project assistance should decline. Ideally, as the country=s macro-economic policies improve economic performance, the transitional financing by NPA should also decline. Countries at Stage 2 include Ghana, Lesotho, Guinea, and Uganda.

At *Stage 3*, countries have effectively implemented and sustained a reform program. They are characterized by an effectively functioning education system, which is financed domestically or by affordable external credits. At this stage, budgetary support for reform is unnecessary, government policies are being implemented effectively, and there is no need for the leverage of policy conditionality. However, the country may still find technical support and training useful, targeted to specific institutions and functions that play a key role in policy analysis and implementation. Such technical assistance and training may, for example, assist to establish and develop research capacity, or in the use of technology (such as a decentralized computer-based information system). Because the context for effective use of technical support is in place, project assistance does not risk undermining national ownership of the reform program due to the lack of a policy context or domestic leadership. Swaziland is an example of a Stage 3 country.

Stage 4 characterizes countries that are entering a second cycle of policy review, requiring an assessment and reformulation of a reform program. In many ways, Stage 4 recapitulates Stage 1 in terms of process, but the difference is that countries at Stage 4 have the institutional capacity and information system to design and manage policy analysis and strategic planning. Botswana, which has recently completed a new education commission report, has moved from Stage 3 to Stage 4. Like Stage 3 countries, Stage 4 countries will find targeted technical assistance, generally provided on a short-term basis, necessary, but would not benefit from budgetary support.

The above description gives an impression of distinct stages of reform into which countries can easily be categorized. A more realistic analysis of reform is likely to reveal that a given country simultaneously occupies a range of points on graph, as in Figure 7.1 below, which provides a schematic representation of the relationship between the status of the education system and strategies for assistance. In some aspects, the reform may have progressed to Stage 2, while other elements of the reform may be more reflective of Stage 1. Given real situations that defy distinct categorization, USAID=s programs most usefully employ a combination of approaches and modalities. This is evidenced by inclusion of both project and non-project assistance in ESS programs. Accurate initial assessment is critical in formulating these kinds of hybrid assistance strategies, intended to best suit the prevailing mix of conditions in the real educational world.

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7.4 Recommended Practices

The shift from project assistance to ESS clearly reflects a major change in Agency understanding of the nature of educational development and the proper role of USAID in promoting that change. What has been less clear are what changes are needed in the Agency=s management practices to support the process of complex systemic change. When successful, systemic change involves institutional and personal transformations at local, regional, and national levels. Systemic change of this type and scale cannot be controlled by tight management accountability based on predetermined, time-fixed, detailed objectives, procedures, inputs, criteria, and outputs. We believe that the essence of systemic educational transformation is the participation of stakeholders in defining and implementing the policy reform. The central task of the manager, and of the donor who supports that manager, is to create an institutional and political environment conducive to institutional learning. The following discussion examines key activities in the design and management of ESS programs in a preliminary effort to identify "best" (or at least "better") practices. These suggestions are based primarily on USAID's experience with ESS programs in Africa, but also draw on work in other sectors and regions.

7.4.1 Sector Analysis and Design

Sector analysisCgenerally viewed as the first step in USAID=s program initiation processC sets the stage for future design decisions. Chapters 3 through 6 showed how the substance and methods of design, in turn, have serious ramifications for how an ESS program performs and the results it produces. In this section, we briefly examine the role sector analysis plays in USAID=s ESS programs, how sector analysis has been conducted in the past, and what our experience suggests about how to do sector analysis and design in the future.

The Advent of Sectoral Analysis

As the concept of educational efficiency gained credence in response to diminished resources for education around the world, education specialists emphasized the need for more and better data and systematic analyses on which to base system recommendations for system improvements. The sector assessment approach and methodology that evolved in the late 1970s and 1980s examined the various components of an education system (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational education, teacher training, curriculum, materials, costs, and financing). The objectives of a sector assessment, though multiple, primarily focused on[91]:

- Establishing a baseline of information on which to base analysis;
- Obtaining government endorsement and adoption of a sectoral approach and methodological model for planning and managing the education and human resource development system;
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness with which internal and external resources are allocated; and
- Basing policy and planning decisions on data analysis.

[91] See M. Pigozzi and V. Cieutat, 1988. *Education and Human Resources Sector Assessment Manual*. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, IEES Project; and Fran Kemmerer, 1994. *Utilizing Education and Human Resource Sector Analyses*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP.

Used by UNESCO, the World Bank, and USAID, the sector assessment often became the first step in designing a donor assistance activity. Within USAID, the IEES Project refined the sector assessment approach and laid the groundwork for USAID education projects around the world.

As might be imagined, the time and resources required to build and analyze a database were great. Sector assessments often required a year or more of intensive work and a heavy roster of specialists. The work was detailed and painstaking, as data needed for the prevailing production function methodology was generated and fed into the system. The result, however, was a comprehensive picture of a country=s human resource sector where none had existed. However, with time, several critiques of the approach emerged. A 1989 review by UNESCO of sector studies in Africa found that little attention was paid to goals set by African governments and educators, the Africanization of sector analysis, long-term debt implications, and policy implications in terms of operationality, emphasizing the ideal or desirable over the possible or realistic. Most significantly, sector assessment analysis and recommendations were criticized as biased in favor of the assumptions and analytic framework of predominant education assistance agencies and oriented toward internal agency decision-making processes.[92]

Sectoral Analysis in USAID=s ESS Programs

At the same time that questions were being raised about the role and approach of sector assessment in education, the 1988 DFA authorization precipitated the design of USAID education support programs in Africa. The pressure to respond to the education earmark and Agency mandates served to truncate USAID=s approach to program design. Rather than a year-long sector assessment that compiled detailed data and analysis in several technical volumes, the designs of the "new starts" in Africa were based on "summary sector analyses."

Sector analysis for ESS programs was intended to fulfill several needs, falling into two broad categories. The first was the determination of whether education was a priority investment vis-a-vis other sector options and whether scarce USAID funds should be invested in the sector. A corollary analysis was to determine whether primary education should be the focus of education investment rather than other educational subsectors. These questions generally called for some form of rate-of-return analysis. However, given that decisions had already been taken to invest in education for either political (e.g., Namibia, Benin, South Africa) and/or earmark reasons (e.g., Guinea, Mali, Uganda, Ethiopia), and that the focus on primary education was part of the DFA mandate, this analysis was generally relegated to a subsidiary role, in which analysis was used to justify, ex post facto, sectoral and sub-sectoral investments.

The second, and more operational, reason for sector analysis in ESS programs was to lay the empirical foundations for program design. Sector analysis would identify priority issues and likely areas of focus for USAID support of primary education, as well as outline the budgetary needs of the sector.

The ESS sector analysis approach consisted of:

! Rapid sector survey and compilation of data from secondary sources (particularly World Bank appraisal reports and government documents);

[92] There is evidence that the sector assessment approach has been amended in response to these criticisms. For the latest guidance, see Fran Kemmerer, 1994. *Utilizing Education and Human Resource Sector Analyses*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP.

- Brief factual description of sector, with emphasis on primary education;
- Description of the status of government efforts/initiatives to improve the sector;
- Identification of critical issues;
- Recommendations for education program options; and
- Identification of additional data needs and studies to advance program design

ESS sector analyses did not offer the same level of detail as earlier sector assessments. ESS sector analysis seldom exceeded 100 pages. Analyses were conducted over a period of three to six weeks by a team of three to six international education specialists. While they were generally assigned a liaison from the ministry of education, seldom did the time or work pressures allow more extended collaboration with ministry counterparts. As time permitted, analytic work was punctuated by very brief field visits to rural schools and communities to provide the team with a first-hand view of schooling. Over time, the ESS sector analysis teams have been paying more attention to educational demand issues that are seldom discussed in the formal documentation provided by ministries of education or other donors. They have also become more efficient in conducting "rapid appraisals" addressing demand. Analysis of the more recent ESS programs in Uganda and Ethiopia have included primary data collected from schools, parents, and communities about the costs of schooling, behaviors, attitudes, and expectations towards education. In addition, later ESS programs have been more likely to act on the "pre-PAAD" studies recommended in either the initial sector analysis or the PAIP.

While the ESS program sector analysis responded to the need for rapid program development, it did not replace many of the technical and procedural advantages of the more deliberative sector assessment approach. Primary data gaps were seldom filled, and analysis was often based on anecdotal information and inaccurate data. To fill this void, many ESS program analyses were forced to rely on other donor analysis, which understandably was biased toward a particular donor=s agenda, which was not always congruent with USAID=s. Later analysis of some ESS programs found that critical issues and constraints had been ignored or misinterpreted. Although sector assessments have rightly been criticized as too "technicist," the extended time spent by teams in-country, the counterpart pairing with ministry personnel, and the high level of attention paid to it by government policymakers provided procedural benefits. USAID=s entry into the sector and project work was eased by the good working relationships developed during the sector assessment period.[93]

Toward a New Role for Sector Analysis

What we have learned from developing ESS programs is that sector analysis should be expanded to:

- Become an integral part of the design process, not a precursor;
- Enable a "go/no go" decision through analysis of "preconditions" of reform and provide a better understanding of where the reform process is;

[93] This is particularly evidenced by the linkages between the sector assessments conducted under and project "buy-ins" to the IEES Project during the 1980s (e.g., Botswana, Haiti, Indonesia, Nepal).

- Fill primary data needs;
- Conduct in-depth diagnostic analysis to respond to both government and USAID needs;
- Identify operational (versus technical) considerations through in-depth political, social, and institutional analysis;
- Promote "team-building" among USAID, the government, and other donors;
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the ministry of education and other groups; and
- Reinforce government capacity to manage the reform.

Much has been written about the technical aspects of sectoral analysis, the types of data to be used and the methodologies to be followed. Elaboration of this guidance is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, experience with the design, implementation, and assessment of ESS programs has suggests that *both the content and process of sector analysis can be amended to better respond to the needs of a reforming educational system and to better reflect the tenets of sustainability underlying the ESS approach.*

New Content

Sector analysis for ESS programs should include more detailed and incisive analyses of the political, institutional, and social dynamics of a country. These analyses are normally included as annexes in a program design document, occasionally accompanied by a "risk analysis" that attempts to synthesize constraints to program effectiveness. Experience with ESS program implementation shows that this is a sound beginning but not sufficient for the needs of good program design. First, the placement of these analyses in the less prominent position of an annex often exemplifies their role in program design. Most program designers we spoke with indicated that the pressures of PAIP and PAAD preparationCwith its emphasis on saying what a program will do and how it will be structuredCtake precedence over the "technical annexes," which are prepared after the design has been developed.

This, of course, does not mean that technical analysis has not in any way informed the design. A review of the design documents for the ESS programs in Africa shows that education system deficiencies are generally well-defined and described, and the rationale for USAID input, both budgetary and projectized, is expertly justified. But the technical analyses mentioned above can and should do more than identify shortcomings in the education system; their content could say more about *how* we structure our assistance than just what assistance we provide. If we can understand the dynamics of how a system operates and accurately identify the different stakeholders and their perceptionsCsuch as how the government works, who is allied with whom, where the true decision-making power is, what the technical capacity of the ministry of education is, how the populace views the government, what role it sees for education, and what it expects of reformCwe are more likely to design an ESS program that responds to field reality and will not be undone by "unanticipated events." Properly done, these technical analyses provide critical information. However, it appears that in some instances the sequence of preparation and the attention given to technical analysis may not be sufficient to produce the detail and depth needed to craft a program that truly responds to the actual situation in the country.

What can be done to facilitate the type of analysis required? First, the sequence of analysis might be

changed. Rather than conducting the "diagnostic analyses" first—dealing with access, quality, equity, and efficiency issues—followed by the institutional, social, and political analyses, both analyses should be conducted simultaneously. Indeed, it could be argued that the institutional, social, and political analyses should be conducted first, as they are essential to determining the preconditions that should inform USAID=s decision to get involved in the sector. In any event, these "operational" analyses should be conducted prior to the actual design of the ESS program, as the "diagnostic" analyses alone are not sufficient.

Second, these operational analyses should be given equal consideration in the design—its justification and structure—of the ESS program. It is essential to understand the political, institutional and social dimensions of how change occurs in the education sector, the roles of the various stakeholders, and the potential barriers and/or points of leverage. As USAID moves from traditional projects to supporting a national educational reform effort, the sphere in which it acts grows wider, more complex, and certainly less familiar. Not only is USAID attempting to influence an entire education system, but because of the nature of educational reform, its success at leveraging change will depend on other ministries, teachers and students, communities, and parents. Through its ESS approach, USAID and its programs have become part of the political economy of the nation.

Though these recommendations are not free of time and resource limitations, there is a less easily remedied constraint—the degree of frankness with which the political, institutional, and social situations can be discussed. Ideally, and nearly always, the design documents are shared with the government, as they should be. However, sensitive information, or analysis of a critical nature could create problems for both the Mission and the collaborating government. In one ESS program, a retrospective analysis of the institutional and political dynamic that impeded a reform effort and the ESS program produced insights that the government asked to be suppressed. Though the reasons were valid, protocols will need to be developed for guiding the handling of such information.

New Process

More important than what is included in the analysis leading to design is how the analysis and design are conducted. The opening paragraphs of this chapter discussed the centrality of sustainability and some of the means of attaining it. Educational reform as the "property" and responsibility of the government is a fundamental tenet of the ESS approach. It is, therefore, natural that participation and ownership should be incorporated into the sector analysis and design procedures of ESS programs. After all, analysis and design are intended to play only a support role in the drama of educational reform. We offer four interrelated suggestions to consider in future analysis and design efforts.

First, analysis and design of an ESS program should not be considered the unique realm of USAID. The approach itself recognizes the centrality of the government and the necessary contributions of many other actors, such as other donors, NGOs and the private sector. Just as the ESS program is part of the national reform strategy, its formulation should become part of the educational reform process. This means that ESS analysis and design should be conducted in partnership with the government, with the government taking a lead role. Parachuting in a technical team for a few weeks to collect and analyze data and produce a sector analysis or program design is not conducive to collaboration. Local counterparts from the government and elsewhere should be given an equal voice in setting the goals for the analysis, developing the workplan, and conducting the analysis. Where local capacity exists, it should be used for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Where it does not exist, capacity-building efforts should be

included in the ESS design process.

A second suggestion is that consultation, consensus, and ownership should be goals of the sector analysis and design process in addition to production of a design document. In the past, collaboration with counterparts was limited to technical staff and policymakers in the ministry of education. As knowledge of the educational reform process has increased, collaboration has expanded to include all stakeholders in the education system. This includes those who will be responsible for implementing the reformCministry officials, regional and district personnel, school directors and teachers, unions, and representatives from other ministries whose cooperation and support will be required, such as the ministry of plan, and the ministry of finance. Consumers of the reform are equally important. As made clear by the dwindling demand for education in many African countries in the 1980s, consumers of education are not merely passive targets of an intervention, but active participants in any reform effort. If the reform does not meet their needs, they will vote with their feet, or, as they did in Mali, will express their dissatisfaction more vigorously.

The Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean has recently pioneered a participatory approach to sector analysis in El Salvador[94] in order to further its own design goals and assist the government in formulating its educational reform strategy. The sector analysis teamed local research groups with technical assistance teams to collect and analyze data. A well-publicized series of discussions and meetings took place with different groups of stakeholders so that broad views and divergent voices were reflected in the analysis. A similar approach is underway in Haiti, where education personnel from the constitutional governmentCwith USAID's assistanceChave plotted out the technical steps required to develop and ratify a national educational reform strategy, including a sector assessment. A parallel strategy was then formulated to ensure broad stakeholder and local specialist participation in problem identification, research and analysis, policy recommendations, and strategy development. In Guatemala, USAID was able to galvanize a major policy reform in girls= education by working with the Ministry of Education and the private sector to develop and implement a plan of consultation, joint analysis, and strategy development. In short, if people-level impacts are desired, then the people should be involved in defining the reform of the education system.

Third, analysis should not be viewed simply as a precursor to design. Granted, some analysis might be an initial step, but the design process should not be "front-loaded" with analytic activities. Instead, sector analysis and ESS program design should be an iterative process in which dialogue and consultation link analysis and decision-making. Feedback and consensus are not needed only on the educational reform package or finalized ESS program design, but are required at the different stages of problem identification, policy recommendations, and strategy development. In Guatemala, a national conference was held to discuss the interpretation of new local research findings about girls' educational attainment and social and economic indicators, as a precursor to developing policy recommendations and building a national strategy to promote girls' education. Several task forces were created from a broad constituency in the public and private sectors, and a series of meetings took place as analysis and design progressed.

A fourth suggestion is that ESS program analysis and design should be used to carry out USAID=s objective of capacity building, with either the government or other local entities. In some African countries, the capacity of the government to develop and manage reform is not strong, and donor program design may predate government reform efforts. Working with local personnel can not only enrich ESS

[94] Refer to "Participatory Sector Assessment in El Salvador," The FORUM for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy 3:4. Project ABEL, Harvard Institute for International Development.

program design but strengthen the ability of the government or other entities to conduct their own analyses. Moreover, as donors and governments generally require much of the same information and analysis, these analyses provide an opportunity for other government purposes to be served.

In recent years, the World Bank and UNESCO have provided technical assistance to host-country interdisciplinary and interministerial working groups for sector analysis. The sector work is carried out over a 12 to 18-month period and centers on the development of issues papers and technical analysis, gradually moving towards larger policy issues. The host country benefits in terms of increased capacity in data collection, analysis, policy assessment, and strategy development. Donors benefit from a shared understanding of the issues and priorities, greater collaboration with and more confidence in the national reform initiative. The challenge is to ensure that confident and well-resourced donors do not, intentionally or not, push the government beyond its capacity to advance at its own rate. Those involved in the design of the ESS program in one program recall the inability of many of the government technicians to explain the content and modes of analysis of the 17 preappraisal studies they "collaborated" on with the World Bank.

These observations demonstrate that fundamental changes must take place in the way we do sector analysis and designCboth in what is expected of analysis and design and how they are "resourced." It is clear that sector analysis and design will require a longer time frame, additional types of expertise, and intensive involvement of the Mission to orchestrate the process. It is also clear that USAID=s program design should not preempt government initiatives. For example, if the country is still in Stage 1 (reform initiation), the ESS program should not aim at Stage 2 (policy implementation) activities. Although Agency analysis may indicate what technical actions should be taken to improve the education system, ESS program designs should not force government action but support it. To force government action circumvents the critical steps of shared analysis, broad participation, and iterative consultation. This does not mean that ESS program design cannot be completed, but that it should conform to the needs of government.

Toward Operationalizing the New Role

Full guidance, incorporating the lessons of the recent past on the "how-to" of ESS program analysis and design, remains to be written. Nonetheless, there are examples of innovative approaches to sector analysis and design in ESS programs, particularly those that are designing a second phase or are among the latest to be initiated. A few examples are:

- In Ghana, as the first phase of the national reform comes to an end, donors and the government have worked closely to orchestrate a national dialogue on education policy and programs. A series of national conferences, research activities, and working groups initiated by the Ministry of Education have been jointly undertaken to identify issues and priorities and provide needed technical information.

- In Guinea, a design strategy for the second phase of the ESS program was elaborated that included a series of workshops with ministry decisionmakers and technical personnel from the central, regional, and district levels to develop an "objective tree" for the sector and discuss government priorities and additional analysis required by the government to move toward strategy formulation. In a planning meeting with donors, the minister of education emphasized government design parameters, such as the primacy of the national reform, the need for donor programs to support the national reform, and for complementary, non-competing donor programs, etc.

- In Malawi, the design of the second phase of the GABLE program involved regular meetings with the ministry, NGOs, and donors. The analytic questions framing the ESS program design were developed jointly with the government and other actors in the sector, including other ministries.

- In Ethiopia, sector analysis and design work extended over an 18-month period. Initial sector analysis provided a snapshot of the sector, identified critical questions and information gaps, and recommended areas for additional research and analysis. A series of studies to inform government and USAID policy in the sector were negotiated and conducted with USAID assistance by ministry offices and local research groups. The results were incorporated into the design of the BESO Program.

- Also in Ethiopia, continued analysis was built into the program, in anticipation of the information and policy analysis needs as the reform progressed. For example, the BESO program will support the capacity of the primary education system to monitor and evaluate its own performance by conducting a series of studies to establish a baseline and periodic surveys to assess progress, including changes in practices, behaviors, or perceptions. This continuous analysis will inform government strategy and ESS program activities.

In summary, most ESS programs in Africa followed an accelerated design process because of the DFA pressure to get programs up and running. This is no longer a problem as most programs are entering their second phase. Resistance to prolonged analysis and design is generally based on the perception that analysis and design is a preparatory phase and nothing of much import is happening. Experience with ESS programs in Africa has taught us that sector analysis and design are integral parts of the educational reform process and can accomplish many of the same goals of fully-designed programs, such as strengthening government ability to manage reform. If sector analysis/design is viewed as an equal step in the reform process, one that is important to both the long-term success of USAID=s ESS programs and the educational reform, the Agency will provide suitable support for analytic and design activities.

7.4.2 Policy Dialogue

Implicit in much of this discussion of sector analysis is the idea of policy dialogue. Policy dialogue might be defined as the forum within which reform is facilitated through structured interaction among the actors in the policy process at its different stages. Policy dialogue can be seen as a means to structure participation and as a vehicle for negotiating consensus on the problems faced in the sector and the best means to address them. In Chapter 4, policy dialogue was described as an input to the predesign phase of education sector activity development. Here we expand the discussion to include the role of policy dialogue in the entire cycle of issues identification, agenda setting, decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. At its best, policy dialogue is organized around information and focused on learning.

Policy dialogue is often narrowly used to describe the process by which USAID and a cooperating government negotiate policy objectives and conditionality, and periodically assess progress towards the objectives and compliance with the conditions. This is just one element of policy dialogue. A more comprehensive definition views it as a much larger process that primarily takes place among stakeholders within the country. Continual policy dialogue helps ensure that: consensus is reached on the definition of an issue, characteristics of the concerned policy are considered, arenas of conflict are identified, stakes are assessed, and potential reactions are foreseen. All of these steps are necessary to facilitate the reform

process and increase the likelihood of success.

A researcher involved in facilitating policy dialogue in South Africa prior to and after the 1994 elections makes a strong case for policy support and dialogue. He contends that experience with both project assistance and conditioned budgetary support in South Africa has yet to "transform" education systems. The lesson from this failure is that educational transformation requires political and social will, which cannot be imposed from outside. Change requires governments and societies that want change, and that desire is dependent on "learning and democratic deliberation." Structured dialogue presents an opportunity for that kind of learning and deliberation to take place.[95]

Policy Dialogue and the Policy Process

In order to understand how policy dialogue can play a constructive role in the reform process, it is useful to examine models of the reform process. The simplest and most common model of policy-making has been called the "stages model." Porter and Hicks, in their review of literature on policy formation, describe the stages model, the view of policy-making as a process of distinct steps: identification of policy problems; agenda setting; formulation of policy proposals; their initiation and development; adoption and legitimation of policies; and implementation and evaluation (which cycles back to identification of new issues based on that evaluation). This model implies that despite contextual variations, the policy process follows a regular pattern. According to Porter and Hicks, "as a social issue or problem is taken up by the policy system it follows a trajectory that can be divided into discrete stages each involving distinct periods of time, different institutions, and a shifting set of policy actors."[96]

The stages model, while useful as an analytic device, fails to capture the complexity of policy-making in the real world. An enhanced model builds on the stages model by portraying more interaction and iteration to the process. In this case, the stages are not mapped out as necessarily sequential. Grindle and Thomas identify three critical junctures in the policy reform processCagenda setting, decision-making, and implementation. They contend that:

> environmental context, agenda-setting circumstances, and policy characteristics influence the perceptions and concerns [of decisionmakers] and shape the nature and scope of conflict surrounding efforts to introduce change. Analysis of context, circumstances, and policy characteristics can account for a significant amount of variability in the outcomes of reform initiatives."

These critical factors determine whether an issue is placed on the policy agenda, stays on the agenda, and leads to formulation of actionable programs, whether those programs are supported and implemented, and whether the intended outcome is achieved. Thus, at any point in this process the issue can be reaffirmed, reshaped, tabled, or rejected, and in the latter case, returned to an earlier stage. Figure 7.2 helps illustrate this process.[97]

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95 See F. Henry Healey, 1994. "Policy Support in South Africa: An Emerging Paradigm," *The FORUM for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy* 3(4) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development, Project ABEL).

96 Robert Porter with Irvin Hicks, 1995. *Knowledge Utilization and the Process of Policy Formation: Toward a Framework for Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development, p. 9.

97 Merilee Grindle and John Thomas, 1991. *Public Choices and Policy Change: The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 183.

Figure 7.2

The overall context determines which issues emerge as possible elements of the reform.[98] Those issues are filtered through the perceptions of the different policy actors to define what is initially accepted on the agenda. Debate and negotiation may alter which issues are considered in play. The characteristics of the policies advocated determine the arena and nature of conflictCpublic or bureaucratic, who stands to win or lose, and what is at stake. Implementors either buy into the policy and implement it, or they do not and ignore or reject it. Ignored or rejected policies necessitate reconsideration of the issues and policy agenda. The implementation of policies may lead to multiple outcomes depending on the availability and sustainability of resources. Those outcomes, positive or negative, feed back into the next round of identification, agenda-setting, and decision-making.[99] What finally results may only slightly resemble what was originally intended, if at all. Thus, it is accurate to say that policy is defined in implementation.

The experience of policy reform in developing countries supports this model of the policy process.[100] In reviewing structural adjustment programs in the 1980s, Nelson summarizes how different factors intervened to affect the timing and scope of adjustment decisions, the content of those decisions and their implementation.[101] Her analysis illustrates the sensitivity of the reform process to context, characteristics, conflicts, and resource availability, and demonstrates how macroeconomic reform has often proceeded in an unpredictable and non-linear fashion.

This conceptual framework helps identify points at which external support can facilitate the initiation and implementation of reform. It also illustrates how easily a top-down, directive approach to policy reform can be derailed between issue identification and policy implementation. USAID=s support for reform activities has often fallen short of its objectives because of a lack of attention to these intermediate stages, as for example in the cases of Namibia, Lesotho, and Mali.

Porter and Hicks refer to this problem as donor "front-loading" of support to reformCwhere more attention is paid to policy analysis than implementation.[102] In practical terms, front-loading is evident in the preoccupation with issues to be addressed as conditionality, and an avoidance of the implications those policy reforms have for the various concerned stakeholders. Gordon and Lancaster contend that while donors have had some success in initiating reform through a top-down, conditionality-based approach, policy reform programs resulting from this approach have been less successful in sustaining reform. They state that in many cases "donor efforts to promote economic reform have generated a 'partial reform' syndrome, where a willingness to initiate adjustment measures is not supplemented by the basic institutional and attitudinal changes needed to carry through [the reform]."[103]

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98 "Context" is defined not just as the social, economic, and political contexts, but also includes the individual characteristics of the main players in the policy dialogue.

99 Merilee Grindle and John Thomas, 1991. *Public Choices and Policy Change: The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 183-187.

100 For illustrations of the importance of political and social context for education policy reform, see David Evans, 1994. *Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*. Washington, DC: USAID, Donors to African Education.

101 See Joan Nelson, (Ed.), 1990. *Economic Crisis and Policy Choice: The Politics of Adjustment in the Third World*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, Chapter 8.

102 Robert Porter with Irvin Hicks, 1995. *Knowledge Utilization and the Process of Policy Formation: Toward a Framework for Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development, p. 12.

103 David Gordon and Carol Lancaster, "The Implications of Political Change in Africa for SPA Donors," (Paper prepared for

This model is also useful in calling attention to the range of actors and stakeholders involved in defining and implementing policy. Even beneficiaries, who may not be officially included in the development and implementation of a reform effort, exert influence on policy outcomes, and critique policy through "strategies of non-compliance" or, at a minimum, voting with their feet.[104] To be successful, reform efforts must address the roles and concerns of decisionmakers, implementors, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

A Vision of Policy Dialogue in Greater Support of Policy Reform

It may be useful at this point to describe the role we see policy reform as playing in the reform process. The starting point is consensus building. Key stakeholders and beneficiaries are identified and included. Agreement is sought, on the basis of objective information, on the definition of issues. A course of action is negotiated, using both professional insights and stakeholder perspectives. Coalitions are then established to carry out the proposed reform. Interested parties are given a stake in implementing the reform. Implementation monitoring provides information from which the actors learn how well a policy/program is being implemented and received. As that information is fed back into the dialogue process, the reform effort can evolve according to whether policies are leading toward (or away from) intended or desirable outcomes. According to this view, policy dialogue is an interactive process, as illustrated in Figure 7.3. The role of the donors is to facilitate the process.

a workshop of SPA donors, April 1993), pp. 142-3.

[104] For example, parents may voice their disapproval of the vocationalization of primary school curriculum by not enrolling their children. For a detailed discussion of participation in policy reform see Derick Brinkerhoff and Nicolas Kulibaba, 1994. *Participation in Policy Reform in Africa: A Review of the Literature*. (Draft). Washington, DC: USAID, Implementing Policy Change Project.

Figure 7.3

African Examples

Policy dialogue has actually played a facilitating role in the implementation of education sector reform in several ESS programs:[105]

- In Mali, after initial attempts at sectoral reform succumbed to student resistance, students were included in dialogue about why, in order to improve and expand basic education, it was necessary to reallocate resources away from tertiary and secondary levels.

- Resistance to redeployment of surplus secondary teachers to primary schools in Guinea was diffused by bringing the dialogue to the local level. Community support for redeployment was strong, and underemployed secondary teachers found it difficult to argue against local demand for more places in primary schools.

- In South Africa, USAID has supported the development of analytic modeling tools to animate dialogue about policy options in the education sector and to ground the consideration of options in terms of the tradeoffs, particularly with regard to resource constraints.

- In Mali and Benin USAID provides support to parents= associations through an intermediary PVO. This support is aimed at improving the capacity of associations to participate in managerial and administrative decisions at the school level. In Benin, parents= associations are being helped to form regional representative bodies capable of negotiating with regional education ministry officials.

- In Botswana, the Ministry of Education launched a "Consultative Conference" to address public concern over the community junior secondary school policy. The process included a series of participatory meetings and an innovative use of video to give voice to grassroots concerns. The consultations developed a collective perspective on the problems and helped move the country towards agreement on action at local, regional, and national levels.

The growing body of experience in policy dialogue has identified some of the its basic elements of success. Policy support is only effective if there is an issue around which stakeholders can engage in dialogue. Stakeholders must be willing and able to engage in dialogue (implying a certain level of civil liberty and respect for democratic principles). There needs to be space among the political agendas where technical arguments can hold sway. Those technical arguments need to be grounded in sound data, research, and analysis. Local counterparts that can commit to long-term policy analysis, advocacy, and dialogue need to be identified. They must also be seen as acting in the public interest and not supporting their

[105] For other examples of successful policy dialogue and stakeholder participation in the process of education reform see Colletta and Gillian, 1994. (*Participation Sourcebook*. (Draft). Washington, DC: World Bank, Education and Training). For some examples of how USAID Missions in Africa are facilitating participation in all aspects of program development, project design and implementation, see USAID, 1994b. *Achieving Participation, A Collection of the Africa Bureau=s "Best Practices."* Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Development Planning.

own agenda. Such counterparts have proved most effective when they are outside the government.[106]

What Does this Mean for USAID=s ESS Programs?

In summarizing five case studies of policy formation in Africa=s education sector, Evans concluded that while all five cases engaged in some form of a consultative process, they all showed "the lack of institutionalized capacity for ongoing dialogue about education policy and its implementation."[107] USAID should make supporting the development and use of such a capacity an integral part of its efforts to support educational reform. Crouch, Vegas, and Johnson propose that USAID "intensify and systematize" efforts at promoting policy dialogue. In some cases, USAID should make policy dialogue the centerpiece of its efforts.[108] With a better understanding of the policy process, and benefiting from the lessons accumulating in the area of policy reform support, we recommend:

106 F. Henry Healey, 1994. "Policy Support in South Africa: An Emerging Paradigm," *The FORUM for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy* 3(4) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development, Project ABEL), pp. 9-10.

107 David Evans, 1994. (*Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*. Washington, DC: USAID, Donors to African Education, page 9. However, it should be noted that Botswana is an exception to this, as illustrated by its case study.

108 Luis Crouch, et al., 1993. (*Policy Dialogue and Reform in the Education Sector*. Washington, DC: Research Triangle Institute, for USAID, Latin America and Caribbean Bureau. Crouch, Research Triangle Institute), p. 9. This paper also lays out specific principles and conditions for successful policy dialogue and education reform.

! Elements of policy dialogueCidentification of stakeholders, analysis of decision-making, evaluation of gains and lossesCshould be incorporated into the design process.[109] Sector assessments should include an analysis of the feasibility of reform and the "political economy" of pursuing different policy objectives.

! Policy dialogue should be addressed as an ongoing element of reform. Processes and mechanisms, structures, and resources need to be established and dedicated to carrying this out.

! USAID should see its role as facilitating the dialogue process. The immediate task is to "facilitate learning"; the longer-term task is putting in place "the democratic structures, capacities and processes to make learning an ongoing part of the policy process."[110] To that end, the Agency should support:

P Mechanisms for gathering, compiling, and presenting data that will make sense to the broad range of stakeholders and beneficiariesCbeyond the traditional annual school statistics approach to EMIS;

P Commitment to analysis as an input to decision-making and development of capacity to use data for analytical purposes;

P Communication among stakeholders, especially between government officials and their clients;

P Enhancement of the capacity of interest groups outside the government to carry out policy analysis and engage in dialogue with government officials;[111] and

P Inclusion in its evaluations of an assessment of the extent to which the Agency facilitated policy dialogue.

7.4.3 Policy Objectives and Conditionality

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[109] David Gordon and Carol Lancaster, "The Implications of Political Change in Africa for SPA Donors," (Paper prepared for a workshop of SPA donors, April 1993), p. 143.

[110] F. Henry Healey, 1994. "Policy Support in South Africa: An Emerging Paradigm," *The FORUM for Advancing Basic Education and Literacy* 3(4) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development, Project ABEL), p. 8.

[111] The Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project is doing this in Ghana, Mali, South Africa, and Uganda by strengthening action research capacity of non-ministry institutes, and structuring advocacy meetings and conferences with government officials based on field research findings. Similar action research projects are ongoing in Swaziland.

The preceding discussion of the policy process and policy dialogue raises fundamental questions about the role of conditionality in assisting policy reform. In particular, USAID's experience and a growing body of literature have shown that the way in which conditions are designed and applied determines whether conditionality hinders or helps the process of policy reform. Two of the most critical issues USAID must face in improving the use of conditionality concern how prescriptive conditions are and who participates in defining them.

Early uses of conditionality in ESS programs were strongly influenced by the general approach that had been taken to structural adjustment. Following the World Bank=s 1988 publication of its policy paper on education in sub-Saharan Africa, certain policy reforms were identified as the cornerstones of sectoral adjustment, most notably the reallocation of resources away from subsidizing higher education and toward expanding and improving basic education. In this manner an "objective" and replicable set of policy prescriptions was thought to exist (and be replicable) for education sector reform, just as a package of macro-economic reforms was being applied under structural adjustment.

Critics of structural adjustment=s use of conditioned financing to leverage macro-economic policy reform focus on this overly prescriptive approach, and particularly its expression through conditionality. As we pointed out in Chapter 2, a basic assumption of the ESS approach is that the nature and rate of policy change can be defined and predicted, and that conditionality can be specified as a function of that prediction. Research questions the basic assumption that "rational" policies, programs, and projects can offer comprehensive solutions to development problems. In place of inappropriate rationality, Rondinelli proposes an alternative approach to reform that is adaptive and contingent on the unfolding of specific circumstances and events.[112] Other scholars question whether conditionality can induce a country to undertake policy changes. Berg documents the limits of conditionality. He details six reasons that explicit conditionality is *not* a useful instrument of policy adjustment Cincluding lack of technical consensus on what solutions will work in which context, the difficulty of obtaining political and bureaucratic consensus, the lack of capacity to carry out reforms intended to alter the basic nature and structure of public sector institutions, and conditionality=s subversion of local "ownership" of the reform agenda.[113] Others point out that conditionality may work well for actions that require one-time changes that can be carried out quickly, but not for "longer-range sectoral adjustments."[114]

Implications for USAID=s Use of Conditionality

These observations have strong implications for USAID=s attempts to use conditionality in support of educational reform. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, some of USAID=s education activities have begun to make use of a more flexible approach to designing and implementing conditionality. Moreover, when viewed in light of a better understanding of the policy process, alternatives to the overly-prescriptive approach begin to emerge.

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112 Dennis Rondinelli, 1993. *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adoptive Approach to Development Administration*. New York: Routledge, p. 15.

113 Elliot Berg, 1991. "Comments on *The Design and Implementation of Conditionality*," in Thomas, Dailami Chibber and de Melo (eds.), *Restructuring Economies in Distress: Policy Reform and the World Bank*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 215-21.

114 Louise White, 1990. *Implementing Policy Reforms in LDCs: A Strategy for Designing and Effecting Change*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 29.

First, conditionality needs to be flexible, for its purpose is to maintain commitment to the reform, not to the letter of specific conditions. In some sense, the ESS approach requires that the Agency commit to the process of reform and not insist on specific outcomes. Specific countries have found innovative ways to structure both flexibility and commitment through Letters of Intent, as described in Chapter 5. The flexibility to evaluate progress and set conditions en route needs to be built into ESS programs.

In addition, USAID needs to pay greater attention to the role of policy dialogue in the processes of assessing progress, setting objectives, and agreeing to conditions. Agency experience and several analyses of donor efforts to support policy reform concur on the importance of ongoing dialogue in determining the success of policy-based programs. Conditionality should be the product of policy dialogue and not simply a set of externally-imposed requirements for receiving funding.

In reviewing the World Bank=s experience with conditionality, McCleary contends that government commitment to a reform program was a greater determinant of successful implementation than was donor pressure through conditionality. He found that reforms are more likely to be sustained if budgetary support is provided on the basis of actions already taken rather than on the promise of future actions.[115] Many of the critiques of conditionality highlight the fact that the carrot and stick of budgetary support and external pressure for reform cannot substitute for local commitment and capacity.

What Rondinelli calls "development projects as policy experiments," and White refers to as a "strategic process for policy changes" both rely on the use of participatory dialogue as the central element in successful implementation of policy reform. Their essential contention is that the reform process is an iterative, inherently unpredictable "experiment." It can be called an experiment if reforms are seen as merely hypotheses, the validity of which will be determined in implementation. Rondinelli describes planning and implementation as "mutually dependent activities that refine and improve each other over time."[116]

Regular reviews of progress and setting of objectives and expectations are consistent with this "rolling design" approach to program implementation. Recent ESS programs have tried to adopt an approach to conditionality that negotiates policy objectives as the defining context for conditions; agreement on expectationsCboth of performance and input; and agreement on interpretation of specific language and what exactly constitutes compliance.

In this way, conditions can be both flexible and rigid. More importantly, such conditionality will reflect an agreed upon set of policy objectives for the sector, not a donor-determined prescription for reform. Benin and Uganda are two countries where USAID is successfully making use of this more broadly-defined negotiation process.

Progress is needed in systematizing the linkages between policy dialogue and conditionality and in opening up the dialogue/negotiation process to include a wider range of participants. Too often attention has been limited to the dialogue between USAID and the government, when what is needed is USAID facilitation of dialogue among host-country stakeholders. Redefining conditionality as a function of

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115 William McCleary, 1991. "The Design and Implementation of Conditionality," in Thomas, Chibber, Dailami and de Melo (eds.), *Restructuring Economies in Distress: Policy Reform and the World Bank*. New York: Oxford University Press.

116 Rondinelli, Dennis, 1993. *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adoptive Approach to Development Administration*. New York: Routledge, p. 19.

policy objectives agreed to in a local dialogue would substantially overcome the current limitations associated with externally-driven conditionality. If, in addition, local policy reform advocates are given a voice and a forum, pressure for change would be indigenous, and would increase accountability and sustainability.

In addition, two examples from USAID=s current ESS programs in Africa demonstrate the potentially crucial role that local policy advocates can play in promoting reform:

! In Mali, where efforts at central reform have had limited success, USAID has supported community schools. These schools are run privately by local communities and present low-cost alternatives to government schools. By fostering the spread of these institutions, USAID helps promote "policy alternatives" and innovations in organization, management, and pedagogy.

! In Benin, USAID has recognized the limits of relying on the central government for reform and resolved to begin work with parents= associations in an effort to develop their capacity to organize into sub-regional, regional, and national advocates for reform.

To capitalize on these developments, USAID could include local advocate and stakeholder input in determining tranche release conditions. Certainly, everyone would benefit if the Agency were to make the processes of setting conditions and evaluating compliance more transparent.

In addition to facilitating policy dialogue, USAID could improve the design and management of conditionality by:

! Relying on policy dialogue and the policy issues identified through that dialogue as the basis for formulating conditionality;

! Developing specific methodologies and guidelines for stakeholder identification and analysis;

! Identifying techniques and methodologies to structure dialogue so that national interest groups have a voice in defining conditionality;

! Building Agency capacity to facilitate dialogue and incorporate the policy objectives identified through dialogue into the processes of design and annual reassessment of programs and their conditions;

! Improving the use of Letters of Intent, in particular making sure that they do not become simply mechanisms for monitoring implementation;

! Promoting greater selectivity in setting conditionality, limiting conditions to a manageable set of key policy objectives for which clear accomplishments are identifiable; and

! Building into activities the option to waive or alter conditions in situations where unforeseen changes in economic or political circumstances make previous agreements untenable, yet where commitment to reform remains strong.

7.4.4 Institutional Development

USAID and other donors have quite poor records in promoting sustainable educational change. One of the most important reasons for this failure is the traditional lack of attention donors have paid to institutional development. We have neglected institutional analysis at the project planning stage and overestimated the capacity of ministries to manage educational policy reform, and even to reform their own offices. Traditional project design assumes that training and technical advice will produce the institutional changes required to manage major reform efforts.[117] As discussed in Chapter 2, ESS programs recognize that finance and policy support must accompany institutional capacity building efforts.

Yet experience and formal assessments provide ample evidence that traditional models of technical assistance have done little to strengthen country institutions. Expert-counterpart models, domestic training programs, and overseas fellowships have all had disappointing results. Traditional technical assistance has been better at propping up flawed institutions than reforming them for self-sufficiency. Traditional institutional development efforts have failed to understand such fundamental determinants of institutional behavior as bureaucratic procedures, incentives, and internal politics. In some countries, technical assistance appears to lead to increased dependency more rapidly than it has increased capacityCdue to the nature of the technology introduced and the complexity of donor requirements for program management. The capacity of implementing agencies within a government is probably the most critical determinant of program effectiveness. And yet, as a World Bank study notes, "African efforts at institutional development were not the centerpiece of the development effort in the education sector, as they often were elsewhere."[118]

The manifestations of this weak capacity were noted in a recent review of the World Bank=s support for human resource development in sub-Saharan Africa:

- Shortages of administrative staff in professional categories are acute: accountants, statisticians, planners, supervisors, curriculum specialists, and managers.
- The organizational structure of ministries has become increasingly fragmented, with a multiplicity of overlapping functions in data collection and use, and planning.
- Information in most countries is unavailable for strategic planning: basic statistics, research, evaluation studies, reference materials, and documentation.
- Management training institutions are themselves understaffed, underutilized, and lack effectiveness.
- Distorted incentive structures fail to reward performance, and civil service pay scales are deteriorating.
- There are shortages of inputs such as equipment, supplies, transport, and communications needed for a functioning office (e.g., photocopiers, word processors, and paper).

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[117] Rondinelli provides an excellent analysis of the gap between project assumptions concerning institutional capacity, and actual capacity of institutions to manage projects (1990, *Planning Education Reforms in Developing Countries: The Contingency Approach*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press).

[118] World Bank, 1993. *The World Bank=s Role in Human Resource Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Education, Training, and Technical Assistance*. Washington, DC: World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department. World Bank, 1993, p. 51.

- Administrative procedures are weak, such as failure to delegate authority; lack of guidance and work plans for staff; appointment/transfer of persons for non-professional reasons; and lack of unit leadership in establishing a sense of purpose and direction.

Where these conditions are severe, technical assistance and training cannot solve the problem, although they may temporarily improve unit performance. Experience has shown that using technical assistance to carry out specific functions needed for a project activity can actually undermine the potential for overall institutional reform because governments do not allocate their own scarce professional resources to this function, and staff within the unit have little or no ownership of the work done by an expatriate.

The gap between these conditions, and the leadership and management requirements implied by a program of national reform is immense and must be addressed as a central issue in the design of USAID assistance. Yet, as McGinn and Borden point out in their comprehensive review of research on operational policy options for ministers of education: "*Almost no research has been done on the organizational, personnel or informational capacities of national ministries of education***.** What studies are available describe the inadequacies of current forms of organization." [emphasis added][119]

Lockheed and Verspoor have identified three broad areas where the capacity of countries to manage their education systems needs improvement: strengthened organizational structures, increased managerial capacity, and effective information systems.[120] It is essential that USAID critically analyze institutional functioning and capacity in these three areas prior to, or as part of, the design process. This analysis should identify the existing organization, functions, staffing, and performance of the various units within the ministry of education, and those units external to the ministry that affect its operations and performance (such as the central government personnel office, the ministries of finance, planning, and central statistics).[121] A central part of institutional analysis is an assessment of the ministry=s operational management philosophy. It is important to know the criteria used to assess the people and units in the organization. For example, are officials evaluated and promoted on the basis of compliance with rules, or on their ability to meet performance goals?[122]

The institutional analysis needs to take account of the management weaknesses that are likely to constrain implementation. A recent assessment of education and training needs in Africa concluded that "the capacity of the ministries to lead and manage the education systems was deteriorating, ironically because of management decisions on the allocation of resources to the administration. The relatively small but strategic inputs required to make administration more efficient are not being made."[123]

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119 Noel F. McGinn and Allison M. Borden, 1992. *A Manual for Ministers: Policy Options to Improve Access and Quality of Basic Education*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development.

120 Marlaine E. Lockheed and Adrianne Verspoor, 1991. *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press.

121 For an excellent example of an institutional analysis of the Ministry of Education, Egypt, see James Toronto, 1990. "An Organizational Analysis of the Ministry of Education, Arab Republic of Egypt." (HIID Development Discussion Paper). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development.

122 Richard Sack, 1992. "Making Education Ministries More Effective, " *IEEP Newsletter* 10(2).

123 J. Auerhan, S. Ramakrishnan, R. Roman, G. Stoikov, L. Tiburcio, and P. Torres, 1985. *Institutional Development in*

Design Strategies for Institutional Development

Successful implementation of education projects depends largely on five institutional issues that need to be addressed in the design phase:

- the degree of *consensus* between the donor and the government on the goals and strategies of the project;
- the *complexity* of the project and the degree to which its implementation depends on effective coordination;
- the degree of *innovation* sought by the project;
- the extent to which *demand* exists or can be created for changes; and
- the *level of institutional development required* to implement the project effectively.

For example, the management processes and structure needed by organizations operating in stable environments and performing routine tasks will differ from those needed by organizations performing innovative tasks in uncertain environments. When there are low levels of innovation and a fairly certain environment, planning can be comprehensive, detailed, bureaucratic, and follow known objectives, technologies, and outcomes. In the real world of African education, however, these conditions rarely apply. Even reforms that simply require increases in finance to manage the rehabilitation and expansion of the physical infrastructure, the procurement and delivery of adequate instructional materials, or the training of staff require institutional development to handle these functions.

Moreover, when a policy calls for innovation, a different "adaptive" management strategy is requiredCone in which planning is incremental, to emphasize learning and adjustment based on experience. In such a mode, feedback from the classrooms and schools is used to support decision-making, which is decentralized and participatory. Communication is interactive, and coordination is achieved through negotiation and facilitation. A powerful advantage of this approach is that staff learn by doing, and capacity increases, becoming part of the reform. The design of the intervention can take analysis of staff capacity as a starting point for determining the nature and scale of innovation.[124] In contrast, complex, technologically sophisticated interventions with rigorous implementation schedules radically increase the need for technical assistance and serve to disempower local officials.[125] In the words of one researcher:

> Experience suggests that the most valuable managerial skill in implementing development projects

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Education and Training in Sub-Saharan African Countries. (Education and Training Series Discussion PaperCEDT22). Washington, DC: World Bank.

[124] USAIDs Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project is designed to build national capacity for school level action research to inform central ministry policy interventions. It has been initiated in Ghana, Mali, Guatemala, and South Africa.

[125] The Lesotho BANFES project was a comprehensive approach that sought to reform curriculum, pre- and in-service teacher training, and vocational education. The design stretched over 18 months, and it was implemented with 23 technical advisors and a separate project unit, that was described by government staff as a parallel ministry.

is not the ability to conform to preconceived plans or schedules, but the ability to innovate, experiment, modify, improvise and leadCtalents that are often discouraged or suppressed by rigid designs and centrally controlled management procedures. What leads to success is the ability of managers to design and manage simultaneously.[126]

Educational policy reform in this paradigm is seen as a process of social and institutional learning, rather than as engineering. Interventions are designed as social experiments, so that the information obtained is used to provide knowledge and guidance to modify strategy. The process systematically builds on sample-based class, school, and community-level information to improve operations and staff training, and to inform policy. At least four institutional conditions are needed to support this process:

! StabilityCof policy goals and organizational support including clarity of the institutional objectives, intensity and duration of financial support, and the tenure of key senior and technical staff.

! Staff qualityCa critical mass of people with adequate training, on staff or available on a regular consultancy basis, for leadership. This presents a major problem for governments where salaries for highly trained persons are not competitive.

! TrainingCinstitutions (schools, districts, departments) are marked by a constant process of staff development and mentoring through ongoing workshops, seminars, and conferences.

! CommunicationCwith national, regional, and international research through consultations, travel, journals, institutional twinning, and, where possible, international electronic information systems such as e-mail.

Where civil service, ministry policies, or culture do not support these conditions, a necessary strategy may be to promote civil service and administrative reform as a (pre)condition for ESS. Civil service reforms typically aim to decrease redundant and inefficient staff, develop performance criteria for promotion and incentive pay, and increase targeted salaries and benefits for functional units. Obviously, such reforms must be well-devised and implemented to avoid reducing morale while increasing capacity.

What USAID and Other Donors Can Do

There are no easy answers to offer, as institutional reform and capacity building are enormously difficult in the public sectors of countries with a long history of functioning government. In Africa, with long-standing bureaucratic practices rooted in a colonial heritage, *institutional development is the most critical, and the most difficult area for donor assistance*. If the goal of development assistance is to facilitate self-determination among clients and within communities, USAID and other donors should not seek to take primary responsibility, or credit, for the performance of education systems. *Rather the Agency must hold itself accountable for developing the institutional capacity that can support systemic reform*. The following recommendations are offered in that spirit.

! Prior to design, USAID should carry out an institutional analysis that critically assesses government and ministry organizational capacity, including clarity of mission, functions, staffing, workplans and

[126] Dennis Rondinelli, 1993. *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adaptive Approach to Development Administration*. New York: Routledge, p. 103.

performance, and potential for reform. The development of a methodology for this analysis would be an important contribution to development assistance.[127]

! Use ESS when the minimal conditionsCmacro-economic structural reform, democratic processes, leadership in education sector reform, and sufficient institutional capacity to manage the increased resourcesCare in place or substantial progress is being made toward achieving them.[128] The strongest justification of the ESS approach is not that it can buy policy change, but that it helps build institutional capacity by placing the responsibility for program management with government rather than with the donor.

! Target interventions that are within reach of institutions= existing capacity and that provide the opportunity for institutional learning and staff development in the process of implementation. This requires that the initial interventions be of limited scope and complexity and that they be managed as "social experiments."

! Do whatever possible to develop local capacity when using technical assistanceC use local consultants whenever possible, establish twinning arrangements with U.S.-based institutions (e.g., universities and regional laboratories), use recurrent short-term advisors rather than resident technical advisors in addition to any needed long-term resident technical advisors.

! Support development of host-country based training, research, and consultancies.[129]

! Develop alternative incentives to motivate teachers, school heads, regional officers, and departmental staff in the ministry to support educational policy reforms.

! Support professional communications among host country professionalsCjournals, professional travel, electronic communication such as e-mail, and institutional networking.

! Encourage civil service reforms (personnel and salary) to encourage qualified, able persons to enter and stay within the ministry and schools.

7.4.5 School Reform and National Policy

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127 Two works that are helpful in demonstrating methodology for institutional analysis are Dennis Rondinelli, et al., 1990. (*Planning Education Reforms in Developing Countries: The Contingency Approach*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press); and James Toronto, 1990. "An Organizational Analysis of the Ministry of Education, Arab Republic of Egypt." (HIID Development Discussion Paper). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Institute for International Development.

128 In Malawi, the political climate at the outset of the basic education program did not seem favorable to a shift in gender policies. Yet the move from an authoritarian to a democratic polity created the conditions to support the USAID intervention promoting girls= access to education. In Benin, while there was initially political leadership and commitment to education reform, it was clear that there was little institutional capacity to manage additional resources. Nonetheless, the NPA component of the CLEF provided the context for developing and strengthening Ministry of Education management capacity, as is now evident.

129 The case of the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) in Botswana is a model of this approach. PEIP established a Department of Primary Education at the University to train teacher training college tutors and district officers. The Department became the base for a country-wide school reform movement, and supported the training of all primary school headteachers.

Educational reform is meaningless unless it creates the necessary conditions for improvements in student learning. However, just as national policy reform has little justification unless it affects school quality, reforming the operations of individual schools has little justification unless that becomes part of a national reform process. Government policy and central planning must be seen in this contextCtheir role is to create the conditions for school and classroom quality. The provision of financial, personnel, and material resources to improve the infrastructure are necessary but not sufficient actions to improve the quality of education. In a review of 211 schools in Guinea, Mexico, and India, Carron and Cau conclude that *it* "*cannot be too often repeated that it is on the school itself that everything depends, because it is there that all the components of the system come together for interaction and determine the teaching/learning process.*"[130] (emphasis added)

Donors have focused inputs at the national level, sometimes addressing policy reforms, such as increasing the primary education budget, and often addressing specific program areas, such as curriculum or teacher training. These activities have not always resulted in improvements within the classroom. Heneveld notes:

> Most of the national reform efforts seem to assume that a national policy and the delivery of inputs to schools will be sufficient to change what teachers do with children in classrooms ... the results in terms of classroom use of new materials, changes in teacher behavior, and improvements in academic achievement have been disappointing."[131]

Some work that focuses on the school and the classroom as the arena for change has begun, and it may be useful to describe these experiments in some detail. The World Bank and USAID have initiated processes for identifying and developing effective schools in several African countries. In Zimbabwe, Kenya, Madagascar, and Swaziland, the World Bank has worked with the ministries of education to form teams of national and local educators. From the considerable literature on school-level factors influencing learning achievement, each team selects the factors that characterize effective schools in their country, details methods for collecting and analyzing information on those factors, and then visits each school a number of times, for two or three days each visit, to gather information and develop school profiles. The profiles of schools in the sample are then brought together in a workshop where teachers and educational decisionmakers develop a plan of action about the possibilities for making improvements at the school level.

It is clear that there must be a minimum level of physical facilities, textbooks, trained staff, and management for schools to function properly. Yet there are many African countries with large numbers of schools that fall below these minimum standards. The evidence is also clear that allocating the financial and material resources to improve infrastructure is insufficient to improve the quality of education. The provision of inputs at the national level must be linked with changes in the way schools operate. This is the rationale behind the School Fundamental Quality Indicators (SFQI) in Benin.[132] The Ministry of Education in Benin, with support from USAID, is developing this innovative approach to school-level

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130 Gabriel Carron and Ta Ngoc Cau, 1993. *The Quality of Primary Schools in Different Development Contexts*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP, p. 197.

131 Ward Heneveld, 1994. *Research into Practice: Guidelines for Planning and Monitoring the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (AFTHR Technical Note No. 14). Washington, DC: World Bank, p. 3.

132 SFQI is a type of Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) indicator, referring specifically to work in Benin. A definition is a set of standards, defined through a process of consultation at all levels of the education system, which specifies essential characteristics that each school must have to provide basic education.

planning, which links national policies and resources for basic education reform to the improvement of individual schools. The system has had three central objectives:

- To create a set of indicators which define the essential conditions necessary for a primary school to provide basic education;

- To facilitate the management and implementation of school improvements; and

- To orient interventions and investments so that by the year 2002, 75 percent of Benin=s primary pupils will be enrolled in SFQ schools.

SFQI represents a set of standards, defined through a consultative process at all levels of the education system, that specify the essential characteristics individual schools must have to provide effective basic education. The SFQI system involves the policy context for improving primary schools, the process of defining school quality, and the application of that definition and criteria for planning at national, regional, and school levels. In Benin this system has evolved over the past two years, and has developed 35 indicators in five categories (staffing, environment, facilities, instructional materials, and school management).

In the United States, school-level improvements are promoted by providing schools with greater autonomy and responsibility. Almost 20 years of experience and research documenting federal efforts to stimulate educational reform at state, district, and school levels provide valuable insights into the process of change. The central role of the school and its staff is emphasized, as is central policy. A synthesis of research[133] draws the following conclusions:

- Systemic reform involves the dissemination of technical innovations, professional development for teachers, and school improvement. A key factor is the emphasis on site-based management, that is, real decision-making and problem-solving autonomy at the school level.

- Educational reform must take a broad, systemic approach that involves structural change. This is done by allowing and attaining autonomy at the school-site level, and by building strong school cultures that foster professional and student growth and development, encourage innovations and constant improvement, and are accountable for their results.

- Sustainable development is built on the mobilization of people (teachers and community leaders) who freely choose to participate in change.

Although the specific agenda for educational change and improvements will clearly not be the same in the United States and Africa, the knowledge we have gained about the *processes* of educational change provides a useful starting point for USAID=s thinking about education in Africa.

Examples of Strategies for School-level Reform

Both in Africa and in other developing regions, there are notable examples of attempts at school-level reform that could lead to large-scale and systemic national reform. Within Africa, the Harambee school movement in Kenya and the Ujamaa schools in Tanzania are well-known examples of national efforts to

[133] U.S. Office of Education, 1993. *School Change Models and Processes.* Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Education.

introduce redefinition of the schooling process. Unfortunately, neither of these movements were sustained into long-term change at student or system levels. However, there are several other cases that can inform Agency thinking and strategy on school-based reform and public-private sector partnership. The Escuela Nueva program in Colombia, the BRAC program in Bangladesh[134] and the 900 Schools Project in Chile[135] demonstrate how innovative child-centered and community-level approaches to school organization, operation, and financing can provide cost-effective alternatives to traditional schooling. The programs targeted difficult-to-reach populations, such as rural children, girls, and disadvantaged urban children. Each program aimed at changing the relationship between the school and the community, on the one hand, and the teacher and the child, on the other. In some cases, teachers were recruited from the community, community focus group interviews were conducted to determine schedules and support responsibilities, and innovative changes were made in the use of physical space and instructional materials.

The Egyptian Community School program[136] is an arrangement whereby the government provides teacher salaries, the community provides school facilities, UNICEF provides furnishing and instructional materials, and a local NGO manages the program. In Kenya, the Aga Khan Foundation worked with 50 government schools in the Kisumu District to develop a school-based teacher training model that centered on the self-expressed needs of teachers.[137] With support from USAID=s Primary Educational Improvement Project in Botswana, the University=s Department of Primary Education, working through the ministry of education and teacher training colleges, developed a set of school effectiveness criteria for use, first in the colleges, then in the schools. The basis for school-level diagnosis and planning was laid through a recurrent country-wide staff development program with primary school heads and district education officers.[138]

All of these programs resulted in the provision of school services more closely allied with local needs and/or in dramatic increases in enrollment, attendance, and learning gains (particularly for girls). Each of these cases has specific cultural, organizational, and social features which make them unique. They are not "replicable" in terms of materials, training, content, or bureaucratic framework. Yet they share the process of restructuring, a characteristic of all systemic educational reform that involves changes in roles, rules, and relationships between students and teachers, teachers and administrators, and administrators at various levels from the school to the district office to the national level, all with the aim of improving student outcomes.[139]

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134 See Ahmed, et al., 1993 (*Primary Education for All: Learning from the BRAC Experience. A Case Study*. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, ABEL Project), for a recent evaluation of the BRAC experience for suggestions of the potential of similar processes for other poor countries.

135 UNESCO, 1993. *The 900 School Project*. Paris: UNESCO, IIEP.

136 UNICEF, 1994. *A Review of Egypt=s Community School Project*. Cairo: UNICEF.

137 Harry Black, et al., 1993. *School Improvement in the Developing World: An Evaluation of the Aga Khan Foundation Programme.* Edinburgh: The Scottish Council for Research in Education.

138 College of Education, Ohio University, 1991. *Botswana Primary Education Improvement Project, Phase II 1986-1991: Final Report*. (Report prepared for USAID), pp. 39-47.

139 U.S. Office of Education, 1993. *School Change Models and Processes.* Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Education, p. 14.

There are five components of school-based restructuring:

- Development of standards of achievement and performance in each key curriculum area, defined for national and local levels.

- Site-based management so that the school, with the support of district and national guidelines, defines its programs and its accountability in relation to those standards.

- Changes in the focus of instruction to an emphasis on student learning rather than the delivery of knowledge; less competitive, more cooperative learning; an emphasis on mastery or outcome learning and on using the school environment and local resources (including community members).

- Development of new, more authentic ways of assessing what students know and can do, consistent with new curriculum and standards.

- Decentralizing authority to the school and teacher level, making teachers more directly responsible for student learning outcomes.

USAID=s ESS programs have begun to incorporate several of these components. For example:

- In Mali, the Mission has worked with both the government and private sector to facilitate the development of community schools and forge a public-private sector partnership in which government provides teacher training and materials and the communities finance the operations of the schools. The Mission has also been instrumental in supporting the development of new legislation which encourages community initiatives.

- In Guinea, USAID supported the second phase of the government-led education reform plans to provide assistance to both the public and private sector to jointly establish instructional standards and operational procedures. Also planned is support of the development of a school "outreach" system that will assist teachers to better manage the classroom environment.

- In Ethiopia, USAID=s recently designed ESS program includes a component intended to provide support directly to schools through the NGO/PVO community and through school director training. The intent of this effort is to help bring about changes in the school environment, promote better school-community relationships, as well as reorient decentralized administration to become more supportive of school-level initiatives.

Institutional/Staff Capacities Needed to Manage School-Based Reform

Even when discussed in these general terms, it is clear that restructuring requires new attitudes and skills on the part of education system personnel at all levels. The functions and skills needed in a ministry with a top-down, comprehensive planning mode of implementing policy are quite different from those in a ministry which supports school-based change. The education supervisor or headmaster model might have the following profile:

- Culturally sensitive, knowledgeable, committed organizer.

- Unburdened with project blueprints and prior agenda, but guided by explicit principles and knowledge of what works.

- Initiates and sustains dialogue to identify and activate local initiatives and resources.

- Allows teachers and community to control the definition of the problem, the strategies for solving the problem, and the implementation of the solutions. Uses knowledge to guide this process with questions and helps set the agenda.

There is considerable evidence from research, both within the U.S. and the developing world, that a focus on school-level management and local responsibility for resources and supervision, coupled with accountability to parents and communities for results, can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of education. Yet the central ministries of education that USAID supports are often incapable of initiating or sustaining school-based reform. Some of the constraints that need to be addressed include:

- Central ministries have poor knowledge of local conditions and weak lines of communication from the center through the regions and districts to the schools.

- The reform process tends to be implemented as a series of policy or administrative decrees, rather than as a process of staff development, learning, and institutional reform.

- National, regional, and district education officials view their roles as exercising control, and ensuring that regulations are followed. Typically they do not act as leaders in defining problems, seeking solutions through consultation, and creatively deploying resources to support those solutions.

- Within USAID, programs are defined in terms of inputs provided at a national level, and have not generally focused on the way in which specific schools and classrooms might be transformed (or remain unaffected) by national policies and resource allocations.[140]

- Budget cycles and planning occur in three-to-five year periods, while school-based reform takes longer.

- USAID projects are driven to achieve objectives and to get results at a national level.

- Donor administrators are rewarded for the size of disbursements, and not for developing national and local institutional capacity.

What USAID Can Do to Support School-Level Reform

The focus on school-level reform is not a call to abandon national level, systemic policy changes. Rather it should be seen as a necessary and complementary strategy to achieve a clearer national vision about how the education system can be improved. It has been observed that one cannot reform a large, complex

[140] This focus on national level policies and institutions appears consistent with the support for national policy reform and institutional strengthening. However, unless that reform has a strategy for school-level change, it will not be systemic. The USAID centrally funded Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project explicitly states this in its goals:

- understand how and why each country's classroom-based interventions influence pupil performance
- demonstrate a process whereby classroom research is utilized by the educational system

educational system without having change at specific schools. But what does it take to bring about an improvement in pupil learning at a specific school? Until that question has been posed and answered, inputs and changes at other levels of the system may well be inappropriate, or at least insufficient. Recognizing this, USAID can work through policy dialogue and specific technical support to:

- Support ESS program strategies that place school-based reform at the center of reform agendas and of institutional development efforts.

- With government and NGOs active in specific communities, develop targeted, sustainable school-based interventions that seek to understand what is necessary to improve pupil-learning.[141]

- Refocus institutional development and staff training to support school-level reform. For example, specific schools should be involved in piloting new approaches to curriculum development or distribution and utilization of instructional materials. The impact of those approaches on student learning and behavior should be used as benchmarks for making decisions about effectiveness.[142]

7.4.6 Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation

In the final analysis, USAID must track and justify its activities, to itself, Congress, taxpayers, and Africans. In Chapters 3 and 6, we discussed the conceptual and operational problems associated with assessing and measuring the results of USAID=s ESS programs in Africa. This section sketches some preliminary, practical suggestions on how Agency monitoring, assessment, and evaluation systems can be made more responsive to the nature of its educational reform programs. Previous discussion described the ways in which applying existing assessment systems and standard methodologies to the new ESS approach constrained our ability to capture and validate the actual changes occurring in the field and the extent to which USAID programs were contributing to those changes. There are three main causes of these problems:

- An incomplete understanding of the way educational reform unfolds and the steps involved in formulating and implementing it.

- An incomplete understanding of USAID=s role in the reform process and the steps it must take to support and track change.

- Premature expectations of short-term impacts.

This should not be cause for discouragement, because all three causes are remediable, and occur as part of the learning experience associated with any new approach. In reality, there is little practical guidance on how to operationally support educational reform. USAID moved into uncharted territory when it initiated its first ESS program in Mali in 1989. The last five years have proved fruitful in expanding the Agency's

[141] The IEQ project in Ghana uses a sample of 20 schools to address this question. Working through a research unit with the University of Cape Coast, a team carried out extensive school visitations to describe conditions and constraints, and developed assessment instruments to determine learning levels in language and math. The present stage works with teachers to develop methods to improve student learning in these areas. At all stages, dialogue with local, regional, and national education decisionmakers is intended to influence national thinking and strategies for reform.

[142] Swaziland=s project includes, as a major component, the development of a continuous assessment system that provides feedback to teachers and schools to guide decisions on improving instruction.

understanding of the dimensions of educational reform and the reform process, including USAID=s role in promoting reform, and using appropriate modalities for monitoring and assessment. With this evolving knowledge, the Agency is better equipped to develop indicators of change and impact, to tailor and reinforce data collection and monitoring systems according to countries' ability to produce required data and to respond to the performance accountability and management mandates. The Agency has a better understanding of how to work in partnership with governments and other stakeholders, how to carry out participatory design, policy dialogue, and achieve a school-based focus. The Agency is well-equipped to adapt conventional evaluation approaches and methodologies to reflect both lessons learned and the basic tenets of USAID=s approach to basic educationCgovernment responsibility, donor coordination, and broad stakeholder participation.

Our discussions with education, program, and evaluation specialists at USAID reveal that the problems have not gone unnoticed. On a day-to-day basis, education officers and others have struggled to obtain the required data to capture the influence of USAID=s ESS programs. Further, our analysis shows that existing monitoring and assessment systems, particularly the logframe and the MER/API systems used to track strategic objectives, can be particularly useful in mapping the cause-and-effect linkages of an ESS program and systematically tracking its impact over time. That problems have occurred in assessing ESS programs does not negate their actual or potential utility.

As our knowledge grows, our expectations of results and impacts will more closely reflect the actual process of reform. We can now begin to map out the reform process through intermediate indicators and even assign loose timelines. While this, of course, is an inexact science that will evolve as Agency experience grows, the evidence from ESS programs suggests that a model for assessing educational reform can be developed.

Charting the Course to Student-Level Impacts

As the analysis for this report has proceeded, the role of student-level impacts in assessment and evaluation of USAID=s ESS programs has generated a great deal of discussion. Some evaluation specialists and practitioners have suggested that student-level impacts be eliminated from consideration of the impact of the Agency=s programs at the present time.[143] Others have argued that unless positive change is exhibited in terms of increased enrollments, achievement, etc., the real target of USAID education investments is not validated. There is merit in both perspectives, and they are not irreconcilable.

First, performance measurement is both desirable and necessary. Any assessment system for an educational reform program must record changes at the student level. (In combination, student-level indicators demonstrate both the "health" and effectiveness of an education system, on the one hand, andCby inferenceCwhether crucial reforms in the education system have taken place and are appropriate and productive, on the other.) The critical issue is when and how student-level changes should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a basic education support program. In other words, what does change (positive or negative) or no change in student indicators signify at different points in the reform of a nation=s education system? To what extent can student-level indicators capture incremental changes in the

[143] For a discussion of the "people-level" impacts and their role in USAID programs, see Maureen Norton, 1993. "A.I.D. as an Entrepreneurial Agency that Manages for Results," (Staff working paper prepared for Research Triangle Institute). Washington, DC: USAID. Also see Cooley, Larry, 1994. "Changes and Opportunities for Performance Measurement in USAID," *USAID Evaluation News* (6:1).

education system? Can student-level indicators serve as a "management tool for allocating funds and improving operations"?[144]

Our analysis has revealed that educational reform unfolds in phases and that a series of actions and activities generally accompany each phase. While this understanding of staged reform can inform decisions about where to initiate ESS programs and the type of modality and structured assistance to use, it can also inform the way program results are assessed and measured. Implicit in the concept of phases are the following ideas:

- Each phase entails a series of activities aimed at specific objectives and produces outcomes that vary according to the stage of reform. For example, a country at the beginning of the educational reform process could be considered successful if it has formulated a detailed national education strategy document delineating the policies and programs which will comprise its reform.

- Within each phase are sub-phases, or clusters of sequenced activities. To continue with the above example, the formulation of a national education strategy could be preceded by data collection and analysis, problem identification, policy dialogue, proposed solutions, and consensus-building.

- Progress toward student-level impacts becomes more apparent, and the evidence more directly linked to student outcomes, as the different phases of reform are completed and associated activities are implemented. For example, a country that has completed the policy-program formulation phase and is in the implementation phase is more likely to have undertaken activities (with indicators such as increased numbers of school places, more trained teachers, and more textbooks per student) that hold a greater promise of directly effecting positive student-level impacts.

If educational reform unfolds in phases, as analysis suggests, how can the reform process be captured in Agency assessment systems? Three options suggest themselves at the design stage:

1. *Map the hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships more closely,* in order to define indicators of impact or results more accurately. The logframe provides a basis for this by proceeding from output to purpose to goal-level objectives. However, because the logframe is limited to three levels, there is a tendency to compress too much information into these categories. For example, a reformed educational system is likely to produce more and better-educated students. This will lead to an improved literacy rate, which is compellingly associated with improved household welfare and social and economic development. In some logframes this chain of causality is not explicitly expressed but is subsumed under "social and economic development." By not making this objective explicit or by relegating it to indicator status as part of social and economic development, an important link in the development chain of logic is lost. This can affect the ways we define and measure progress.

The "objective tree" approach—used in developing strategic objectives and targets for Mission country programs—is more amenable to a detailed unbundling of objectives.[145] Although not a basic education

[144] Steven Gale, 1994. "Performance Measurement: Public Pressures and Legislative Mandates," *USAID Evaluation News* (6:1).

[145] USAID, 1994c. *The 1993 PRISM Analytical Frameworks: A User=s Guide, USAID Managing for Results Working Paper No. 5.* Washington, DC: USAID, Center for Development Information and Evaluation.

program, Figure 7.4 illustrates how designers have modified the logframe format to clarify where a proposed activity stood among a constellation of cause-and-effect linkages. By mapping this out, designers were able to define a realistic purpose and goal for the activityCthe critical step in identifying meaningful indicators.[146] In addition, such an exercise aids both planners and Mission management to determine the extent to which the mission and its ESS program can ensure results. Distinctions can be made between full attribution and responsibility, on the one hand, and contribution and assumption of risk, on the other. This distinction is especially important in an ESS program using an NPA modality that is generally part of a multi-donor effort, which provides unearmarked funds to governments, and which expects ministries of education to implement the reforms and produce results, rather than rely on a cadre of expatriate technical assistance. The Agency is increasingly turning to development approaches in which it plays only a supporting role. In such a context, clarification of the magnitude of USAID control should not be viewed as an attempt to escape "accountability" or to replace a focus on results with a focus on inputs, but as a means of better understanding all the inputs and actions required to "get results." Such an approach will better equip the Agency to regroup if needed inputs outside the USAID education program are not forthcoming.

Using the same analytic approach for both ESS and Mission country programs has an additional benefit. By comparing the two objective trees, education program designers and Mission management can determine whether and how the two are linked in the sector. More importantly, they can see whether the ESS program is likely to produce impacts at the Mission strategic objective and/or target levels. This is particularly important in Missions where strategic objectives focus solely on the sector (e.g., Benin) or where there is only one education activity.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the objectives claimed for the sector at the strategic objective or target level occasionally appear to exceed what the education support program was designed to produce. In order to understand results expected of the country program, it is important to understand how the ESS program links with other education sector activities or with activities in other sectors. This, not ESS programs per se, is what the Africa Bureau=s API and PRISM performance measurement systems were designed to track and measure. If the sum of the education activities or those activities in combination with other sectors does not appear likely to achieve country strategic objective or target indicators, amendments may be in order, either in ESS program design or in its definition and measures of success.

[146] The challenge at this point is to identify a purpose that is both realistic and "meaningful and significant." Noting the phenomenon of "aspiration inflation" for many country programs, Larry Cooley writes in the *USAID Evaluation News* (Vol. 6, No.1, p. 14): "For USAID, the trick is to find objectives that are high enough to be consequential in the eyes of Congress and the American people, yet low enough that USAID can feeCand demonstrateCa strong association between its efforts and these objectives." As we contend in this report, this is equally true for USAID basic education programs.

Figure 7.4:
Pyramid of Objectives

By mapping the analytic framework of an ESS program more closely, designers can also better identify assumptions and critical conditions for successfully realizating the objective. While it is unlikely that all the variables affecting results at the various levels can be identified, it is possible to flag major technical, institutional, and political considerations. Listing the assumptions in reasonable detail can underscore the other necessary inputs not provided by USAID and give designers, managers, and evaluators an idea of the magnitude of risk and interconnectivity of the intervention. Such efforts should contribute to more realistic expectations of what USAID support can produce and leverage in the process, and may clarify issues surrounding attribution. If assumptions are treated as critical hypotheses and subjected to periodic "testing" in relation to results or lack thereof, the link between the ESS program and its impacts will be better articulated and information crucial to program management obtained. The evaluation team for the mid-term review of the Ghana PREP program laid out the assumptions of the program, along with a "framework" of claims about program success, in order to examine the veracity and viability of key cause-and-effect linkages. By doing so, they were able to distinguish between attribution and contribution and to distinguish boundaries of what the program could and could not accomplish.

2. *Create an "impact matrix."* A major message of this report is that as our understanding of the reform process has increased, a model Calbeit inexact Cof results or impact has emerged. This is based on several key observations that were detailed in Chapter 3:

! Changes in the educational delivery system precede changes in student outcomes. The purpose of ESS programs, their conditionality and technical assistance, is to assist governments in putting these changes in place.

! Change occurs in phases, for illustrative purposes roughly grouped into four phases: formulation of reform, planning/adoption, implementation, and assessment/ adjustment.[147] USAID may support reforms at different phases in the process.

! Change occurs in different arenas in the system: policy, institutional, school, and community.

! Change occurs over time, generally, though not always in exact sequence. In general, the phases of reform occur in sequence, while change in the various arenas of reform may occur simultaneously.

With these concepts of system, phases, arenas, and time, a matrix can be developed to identify and organize the changes that must occur in the system, the results and their indicators. The phases and projected timeline compose the horizontal axis, and the arenas of change comprise the vertical axis, as illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Education Program Impact-Indicator Matrix

Expected System-Level	Phase 6	Phase 1: Reform	Phase 2: Reform	Phase 3: Reform	Phase 4: Reform

[147] These groupings are based on a variety of sources: Robert Porter with Irvin Hicks, 1995. *Knowledge Utilization and the Process of Policy Formation: Toward a Framework for Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development; Wadi Haddad, 1994. *The Dynamics of Education Policymaking: Case Studies of Burkina Faso, Jordan, Peru, and Thailand*. Washington, DC: World Bank, EDI; USAID, 1994a. *AFR/SD/HRD Consultative Meeting on Policy Formation*. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development.

Part III. What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go from Here?

Result:	Arena: 9	Formulation (w/in 1-2 yrs)	Planning & Adoption (w/in 3 yrs)	Implementation (w/in 5-10 yrs)	Assessment & Adjust-ment (w/in 5-10 yrs)
	Policy:				
	Institutional				
	School:				
	Community:				

This matrix can be used to deconstruct on an individual basis the various purpose-level objectives of the ESS program. For example, assuming the purpose of the education program is to "improve the education system" (in keeping with DFA guidance), an expected result may be to "strengthen the financial management" in the ministry of education. This would be inserted in the first column. Moving across the chart, the empty cell would then be filled in with indicators of having made progress toward or having achieved this goal. These indicators would be organized according to phase and arena. Using the example of financial management, an indicator of a change made in Phase 1 in the policy arena might be "annual budgets required." (Note that all cells would not necessarily be filled, and, for purposes of illustration, notional time frames have been given. Further, individual reforms might not start at the same starting point.)

Ethiopia=s recent design of the BESO program has admirably adapted this approach, as illustrated in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Impact Matrix Example
Expected Achievements and Impact of BESO (USAID/Ethiopia)

Area of Achievement	Short-term (1-3 years)	Medium-term (4-7 years)	Long-term (8-15 years)
Improvements in Quality-Related Inputs	**Policy Level Achievements** ! The relationships between EMPDA, ICDR, and EMMA and REBs, ZEOs and WEOs clearly articulated. ! Policies enacted and implemented to promote and expand role of private sector in delivery of educational services and inputs. ! Commitment to evaluate cost and pedagogical effectiveness of educational services. **Institution Level Achievements** ! Authority articulated and implemented for regions to contract with private sector for educational services and inputs. ! Improved regional capacity for curriculum, textbook, and media development. ! Criteria developed and implemented for assessing effectiveness and efficiency of instructional material. **School Level Achievements** ! Modest number (10 to 15 percent) of school in focus area receive adequate levels of instructional materials.	**Policy Level Achievements** ! Continued articulation and enforcement of policies and reforms. **Institution Level Achievements** ! Monitoring, evaluation and reporting system for assessing the pedagogical effectiveness and efficiency of educational services and inputs implemented at the regional and lower levels in focus areas. ! More cost-effective educational service providers. ! Modest amount (10 to 15 percent) of educational and services and inputs contracted from the private sector. ! Improved capacity of certain institutions to support regions. **School Level Achievements** ! Significant number (25 to 50 percent) of primary schools in focus area receive adequate level of instructional materials. ! Modest number of schools develop capacity to monitor pedagogical effectiveness.	**Policy Level Achievements** ! Policy reforms firmly in place. **Institution Level Achievements** ! Cost of instructional material and supplies reduced significantly (10 to 25 percent) coupled with increase in quality and more efficient delivery. ! Significant amount (25 to 25 percent) of educational services and inputs contracted from private sector. **School Level Achievements** ! Significant number (50 to 70 percent) of primary schools in focus area receive adequate level of instructional materials. ! Significant number of (50 to 70 percent) of primary schools in focus area receive pedagogically effective instructional materials. ! Significant number (50 to 70 percent) of primary schools in focus area receive adequate levels of instructional materials.

3. *Develop a "continuum of indicators."* Just as the changes associated with educational reform occur at different levels, in different phases, and in different arenas, indicators of significant change will occur along a continuum. The use of phases captures, in part, this idea of incremental change. Within each

phase, a range of indicators can be developed to track progress. For example, in the reform implementation phase, several actions must happen for a strengthened education system to be put in placeCteachers trained, classrooms built, books developed and purchased, etc. For each of these changes to occur, there is subset of activities that can be identified. Box 7.2 illustrates the concept of an indicator continuum created for a government=s initial steps to develop a strategy to increase girls= education.

Box 7.2: Example of an Indicator Continuum

Task Objective

Government initiates formulation of a policy and program package to increase educational opportunities for girls at the primary and secondary school levels.

Indicators

- Government/private sector task force(s) on girls= education formed
- Background materials/research to define problem and review previous experience in country prepared
- Consultative meeting with stakeholder to review problem, discuss options held
- Plan-of-action to develop national strategy formulated
- Committees formed, tasks assigned
- Information on tasks and purpose disseminated to public
- Detailed proposal for donor input/assistance to strategy formation process prepared and submitted by government

Of course, not all indicators are equally significant as harbingers of change, but the various steps in the process of achieving change should be understood in order to track and report progress. More importantly, creation of an indicator continuum facilitates the Agency=s new "managing-for -results" approach. Unlike previously, when "data were often collected retrospectively, the focus now is more on built-in data collection and ongoing monitoring." An indicator continuum can help specify the steps needed to reach an anticipated result, shifting the focus "from using data primarily for reporting on progress to using data for decision-making, which is what really counts." [148]

Facilitating Assessment of Impacts

USAID=s performance measurement system (PRISM) not only distinguishes between progress reporting and evaluation, but it makes clear that the first is not a substitute for the second.

> Performance measurement typically tracks rather than explains results. Thus, if an agency needs more information about "why" a target has not been met, or if recommendations about program improvement are wanted, it can decide at this point to conduct a more in-depth evaluation.... If performance measurement systems are appropriately complemented by evaluations, together they can be powerful management tools for decision-making.... The ultimate aim of performance measurement information is achieved only when its use influences management actions and thus feeds back to

[148] *USAID Evaluation News* (6:1), p. 3.

improve the agency=s programs.[149]

While PRISM is concerned with the results of Missions= country programs, its point about evaluation is no less true for ESS programs. Evaluation continues to be a necessary means of understanding USAID=s role in the reform process as well as of providing guidance for mid-course corrections in its programs. However, the ESS approach to educational development implies significant changes from the past project approach. First, the evaluative questions have changed. And second, the philosophy of sustainability underlying this new approach suggests that evaluation be organized differently than in the past. While this report is a first step toward developing more operational guidance in these areas, many ESS programs have already created or adapted innovative practices to facilitate assessment and evaluation. Here we briefly review a few of them, some planned and some implemented.

In the past, assessment of education projects generally centered on the enumeration of inputs within its generally narrow sphere of action (e.g., USAID=s technical assistance in training instructional designers in a curriculum development unit). This lent itself to a simple "discrepancy" analysis (e.g., the number of instructional designers actually trained vs. the number planned). USAID=s approach of supporting governmental reforms suggests two key evaluative questions:

! To what extent has a country=s primary education system been strengthened and improved?

! To what extent has USAID=s education program contributed to that improvement?

Naturally, input analysis is a still a component, necessary to determine whether USAID has provided the support it planned. However, analysis must also include government inputs and outputs, as well as student-level results.[150] Not only is more extensive data required, but also additional types of data, which are not always included in standard indicator lists, are required.

A first step is to ascertain the types of data required and plan where and how to obtain them. Three countries provide examples:

! Recognizing the data and reporting burden that donors would place on the Ministry of Education in Guinea, the Guinea PAAD called for meetings of donors and the ministry to determine the data, indicators, and reports each would require in order to avoid overwhelming the statistics unit and to establish an efficient reporting system. While this did not happen as systematically as planned, the World Bank and USAID agreed to accept, in principle, the same documentation and reports for reviewing performance conditions.

! In Ethiopia, the Mission commissioned the development of a comprehensive performance information management plan and database in its new country program. Individual sector strategies and activities were reviewed, lists of recommended indicators compiled from program documents, and sources of information identified. More importantly, the mission reviewed the data sources, audited their

149 *USAID Evaluation News* (6:1).

150 It should be pointed out that what under a typical USAID project in the past was considered an input (e.g., textbooks purchased) should be elevated to an output or even a higher-order outcome in the context of an educational reform support program. This is because under this new approach it is the government or ministry of education, not USAID, that provides the books and does so with its own funds, a significant benchmark in the reform process for many African countries.

veracity, and evaluated their usefulness in providing the needed information. When sources proved inadequate, plans were made for alternative means of obtaining data.

! In Ghana, each Mission=s technical office Cincluding education Cand the associated host-country ministry designated a staff member for program monitoring and evaluation, thus contributing to timely consolidation of information.

Baseline data are often not available, although they are critical to assessing progress. Further, certain types of information Coften of a more qualitative nature, such as community knowledge and/or support of the national reform effort Care not normally collected by education ministries, yet they are important for program planning and reporting on intermediate indicators.

! Missions in Mali, Uganda, and Guinea supported surveys to determine the factors involved in girls= participation in primary school, as well as classroom observations of girls= treatment and behavior. These data provide a baseline against which planned improvements in girls= education opportunities can be measured.

! In Ghana, the Mission supported achievement testing of five percent of sixth grade students to determine whether the education reform was manifested at the student level. The finding of very low performance caused the Mission to reconsider both its ESS program goal and its approach, and caused the government to initiate a curriculum revision.

! In Ethiopia, the monitoring and evaluation plan for BESO calls for longitudinal case studies of 132 classrooms and 660 students to determine how they are affected by the changing education system, which BESO supports.

! In Mali, baseline data were gathered from a representative sample of schools on several topics which would be tracked over time Cthe availability of instructional inputs; demand for education, especially in relation to labor demand and attitudes related to female education; school organization; and teachers= pedagogical practices.

Under the project approach, evaluation primarily involved USAID technical staff in the sector, the contractor=s staff, and government counterparts. This reflected the relatively narrow sphere to which project assistance was targeted. Further, evaluations were routinely scheduled mid-way and at the end of a project.

However, with different founding assumptions and expectations, USAID=s ESS approach to basic education calls for restructuring evaluation to reflect changes in development philosophy.[151] The ESS approach recognizes that a variety of actors are involved in implementating a national educational reform effort, including donors, ministry of education personnel from all divisions and ranks, and officials from other ministries, e.g., plan and finance, USAID=s awareness of the links between participation, ownership, and sustainability, combined with the pervasive and political nature of educational reform, underscores the need for inclusion of all stakeholders in the design and evaluation of ESS programs. Appreciation of the longer time frame that an educational reform needs as compared with traditional projects as well as

[151] Changes in USAID=s development philosophy and approach coincides with changes in the thinking about the role and purpose of evaluation in general. In education, the evolution in evaluation approaches is best presented in Lincoln and Guba, 1989. (*Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage Publishers).

the complexity and myriad steps involved in comprehensive reform argues against evaluation as a one-off activity scheduled once or twice in a program=s life. Instead, what is needed is an ongoing and widely participatory dialogue with continuous assessment, feedback and adjustment. A few examples from ESS programs that have undergone evaluation show how these precepts have been incorporated into evaluation activities:

! In Namibia, evaluation was planned to occur concurrently with program implementation. An evaluation contractor was selected at the beginning, and regular visits were scheduled over the life of the program. The idea was to "front-load" the evaluation process so that the evaluative questions could be identified at the same time that the people involved in the reform were beginning to assimilate and clarify its purposes. The evaluators, who remained constant throughout the exercise, were viewed as facilitators and mediators of a policy dialogue rather than as judges of program success or failure. To develop sets of indicators, the evaluation team worked with technical teams in the Ministry of Education, and supplemented these talks with discussions in other government ministries, the teachers= union, school personnel, and parents to determine how "successful" educational reform would be defined.

! In Mali, the Mission developed its plan for mid-term evaluation based on broad stakeholder participation. The evaluation team consisted primarily of local experts (four Malians, two expatriates), and data collection and analysis was preceded by three days of team building. Interviews included parents, parent-student association members, and local school personnel.

! In Ghana, the evaluation team included an "evaluation facilitator," who was not assigned to a technical area, but was charged with fostering linkages and dialogue among mission staff, the Ministry of Education, and the evaluators. Fortuitously, this person was retained in a long-term capacity, and this has facilitated feedback and incorporation of recommendations into both the Mission=s and the government=s programs. The

recommendations from the evaluation are integrated into the annual evaluation schedule, which tracks follow-up on recommendations.

These disparate examples indicate that an evaluation approach, congruent with ESS programs, is beginning to emerge. Although many of the Missions and evaluation personnel interviewed were not completely satisfied with either the process or the actual analysis, their critiques were surprisingly consistent. They concluded that more time should be given to the evaluation process, it should be structured to be a host-country driven effort, the number of participants should be expanded to include parents and teachers, expatriate advisors should be familiar with participatory methods, and the feedback loop should be completed with workshops organized around evaluation findings.

As the pressure to measure performance increases, progressing from the DFA mandate of the late 1980s to the "reinventing government" initiatives of the Clinton administration, the need for information and demonstrating impact will not lessen. With the Africa Bureau=s API system and the agency-wide PRISM system, useful analytic tools have been developed to assist in assessing the impact of USAID=s country programs. The challenge in education is translating these concepts and guidelines and making them work for an ESS program. We want to avoid becoming what one education specialist called a "cargo cult," where a few narrowly-defined measures, inappropriately applied, are used to determine the success of USAID=s work in education.

7.5 Conclusion

It is clear that restructuring and reforming the education system is essential to improving Africa=s human resource base. The past six years have provided USAID with the opportunity to learn new ways of supporting basic education in Africa. The basic lesson is that creating a policy environment conducive to sustainable, equitable, quality education is absolutely essential for any real improvement to take place. The Agency has begun to reorient its practices of management and accountability to support the new modalities of assistance. We have learned that both ESS and project assistance are needed, and that education programs should not return to narrowly-focused traditional projects at the expense of systemic reform and institutional capacity building. As we move forward, we should continue to learn and to ask how we can best craft an approach to support education systems which will better teach the children of Africa.

Appendix: End of Project Status Indicators (EOPS) from Logical Frameworks

Country	Access	Equity	Efficiency	Quality	Sustainability
Mali Purpose: To improve the efficiency of the Govt. of Mali's basic education system.			! 10% per pupil cost reduction at the primary level and 45% at higher levels. ! Reduction in number of years of schooling required for one primary school graduate from 24 to 17.		! Parent/Teacher associations receive grant funds from the government's matching grant fund.
Ghana Purpose: To strengthen the policy and institutional frameworks required to assure a quality, accessible, equitable, and financially sustainable Ghanaian primary education system.		! Equity Improvement (EI) Policy in place; EI Program being implemented.	! Policy for increased decentralization of MOE in place; MOE financial, managerial and operational authority decentralized. ! Education system planning, management and supervision significantly strengthened.	! 90% of primary schools have qualified teachers and basic teaching materials. ! Institutionalized student achievement testing system being administered. ! Policy and plan in place for increasing the percentage of primary school expenditures spent on teaching materials to 6%.	! Adequate proportional expenditures for primary education funded entirely from MOE's own recurrent budget excluding donor funding.
Guinea Purpose: To achieve a level of staff and organizational performance within MOE which promotes a continuously improving quality of schooling to a continuously increasing percentage of the primary school age cohort and to ensure equitable access to girls and rural children, through support of the implementation of the National Educational Policy of the government.	! 3% increase in primary school enrollment by 1992. ! 30% admission rate by 1992.	! No decline in % (30%) of girls' enrollment through 1992. ! 5% increase in enrollment in rural areas by 1992.	! Target strategies and implementation budget plans to improve equity, access and efficiency of primary schooling being developed and monitored on a regular basis by Ministry of Education (MOE) staff. ! Increase completion rate (40%) to reach 72% by 2000. ! Reduce years of instruction/ or adequate (16.1) to reach 8.2 by 2000.		

Country	Access	Equity	Efficiency	Quality	Sustainability
Lesotho Purpose: To improve the quality and efficiency of primary education through establishment of a new policy framework and reformed institutional structure.			! Effective MOE structure, MOE school parent relationship, MOE financial management, evaluation, and planning.	! Increased number and quality of lower primary teachers; improved teacher training programs. ! Improved curriculum, materials, and testing for lower primary. ! Improved classroom environment for lower primary. ! Achievement levels as measured by Standard 3 test will not have decreased.	! Increased MOE budget and increased share for primary education.
Malawi Purpose: To increase girls= attainment in basic education.		! Increase percentage of girls in each standard.			
Benin Purpose: To institute an effective, efficient, and equitable primary education system that is sustainable.	! Gross primary enrollment rates will attain 78% nationally, and will continue to increase and meet targeted levels in every region.		! Average repetition rates in grades 1-5 will drop below 15%, and will not exceed 20% in any region. ! Average drop-out rates in grades 1-5 will fall below 15%. ! The proportion of 6th grade entrants sitting the CEP will increase to 90% (from approximately 80%).	! Proportion of 3rd and 6th grade completers demonstrating mastery of core educational competencies will exceed the baseline measure. ! National target of 75% for the % of students in FQL schools is met, and regional FQL targets are met. ! Average student-teacher ratio will range between 40 and 50 to 1, with an interregional and urban/rural range of no more than 8 to 1.	
Namibia Purpose: To establish an effective, efficient, and sustainable basic education system accessible to all Namibian children.			! Progress towards 80% of Primary 1 completers completing Primary 7. ! Progress towards 20% decrease in primary cycle completion time. ! Progress towards 15% decrease in cycle costs.	! Progress towards 60% of primary school children in Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) schools in each region.	
Uganda Purpose 1: Improve the quality of classroom instruction to enhance students= acquisition of basic skills. Purpose 2: Improve the efficiency of local level education administration, management, and accountability. Purpose 3:		! Rise in girls= persistence rates.	! Teachers= salaries paid in time to teachers actually teaching.	! Evidence of improved classroom teaching. ! Evidence of continuous assessment in the classroom. ! Evidence of resources flowing to the schools.	

Country	Access	Equity	Efficiency	Quality	Sustainability
Reduce inequities in access to and persistence in primary education.					
Ethiopia Improve quality and equity in expanded system of primary education.	! Increased gross enrollment ratio.	! Increased % of female and rural enrollment, persistence and completion.		! Higher percentage of schools meeting quality and equity profile. ! Increased primary cycle pass rates. ! Improved student achievement.	
Swaziland **Purpose:** **o improve the quality and efficiency of basic education.**			! Repetition and dropout rates reduced by 30%. ! Logistics management in schools improved as indicated by an increase in timely availability of a standard set of commodities. ! MOE using empirically generated data to make policy and planning decisions.	! Effectiveness of instruction improved as indicated by student test scores. ! Headmasters engaged in improved instructional leadership as indicated by improved student test scores and an increase in the number of primary schools offering home economics and agriculture courses. ! Teachers actively engaged in instructional activities at least 90% of their classroom time. ! High quality and appropriately trained Swazi students and school teachers as indicated by: (a) practical subjects studied and basic skills mastered; and (b) English language fluency.	
South Africa **SABER Purpose:** **Increased development and use of innovative educational models and policy systems which improve the quality of primary education for historically disadvantaged South Africans.**		! Increased participation of male and female primary school students.	! Increased persistence rate of male and female primary school students.	! Increased percent of quality and quantity of student achievement at the end of primary schooling.	
Botswana **Purpose:** **To enhance and increase the capacity of the MOE and consolidate a nine year basic education program.**			! Enhanced organizational and staff capacity among curriculum developers, teachers, evaluators, researchers, and planners.	! Integrated basic education curriculum. ! Improved management of the curriculum development process and greater coordination with teacher education.	

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